TELOS

Number 97 *Fall 1993*

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Durando: The Rediscovery of Ethnicity
Miglio: Cultural Roots of Federalism
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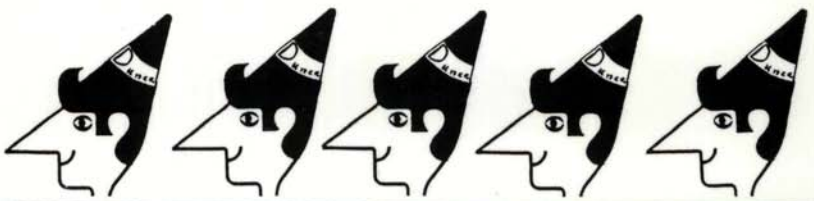
The Crisis of American Education: Symposium on Russell Jacoby's *Dogmatic Wisdom*



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Telos

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This issue is dedicated to the memory of
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Introduction

The premature death of Christopher Lasch marks the loss of one of America's foremost thinkers — probably the most honest and perceptive critic of his generation. This issue is dedicated to him not only in recognition of his contribution to whatever remains of serious public debate in the US, but also as a tribute to a friend, colleague and collaborator. His frequent participation in internal debates within the *Telos* editorial board over the years has been invaluable. Through informal contacts dating back to the time when he first moved to Rochester and the journal was still located in Buffalo, through the St.Louis period, up to the last few years when there were regular bi- or tri-weekly meetings between him, some of his close associates in Rochester and the various *Telos* editors in upstate New York, his influence on the journal's direction has been considerable. His critique of progress and of the academic Left, the move beyond psychoanalysis, the reconsideration of populism, and the general rethinking of liberalism and democratic theory paralleled the journal's efforts to develop Critical Theory beyond its conformist involution in Germany (as a result of the "linguistic turn") and its liberal degeneration in the US in the hands of opportunist epigones seeking to relegitimate a "civil society" withering under New Class domination by advocating more of the same.

The academic Left's recycling of "radical democracy" in the wake of the collapse of "really existing socialism" overlooks the need for a post-liberal institutional framework which would make possible direct political participation. More importantly, this Left is threatened by the ultimate implications of democracy and freedom — the possibility of a free polity making choices anathema to the abstract Enlightenment ideology the Left uncritically assumes to be the *necessary* outcome of democratic self-determination. Lasch's re-examination of populism and that much-maligned "petty-bourgeois" ideology presumably swept away by

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the irresistible winds of a mythological progress rejected in theory (after, e.g., Walter Benjamin's devastating critique of historical necessity or Gramsci's demolition of Bukharin's vulgar materialism) but not in practice by a still *soi-disant* "progressive" Left, paved the way for a truly radical reformulation of a potentially emancipatory politics for the 21st century. This allegedly "reactionary" move infuriated a Left which, discredited in society but entrenched in academia, has sought to justify its political *raison d'être* by inventing new victims through which to mediatize its covert New Class interests.

Lasch's contributions in the last two decades stand out so starkly precisely because of his courage to swim against the tide, notwithstanding the ostracism it precipitated. His bold intellectual trajectory, however, was cut short before he could draw out all the radical implications it entailed. Thus, in intense discussions with the *Telos* editors, he held on to traditional liberal ideals such as universal values, federally-enforced civil rights and a rational *national* policy. He never fully bought the *Telos* vindication of a "federalism" compromised even before the final draft of the US Constitution as what is distinctively American, nor the critique of abstract rights enforced by a distant self-serving central authority as legitimating tools for New Class bureaucrats. His disenchantment with liberalism was largely predicated on the privatization of morality and the consequent curtailment of any meaningful public debate concerning vital issues.

The outcome of Lasch's conflicts with what still pretends to be a Left was a realization of the uselessness of efforts to continue framing political debates along Left-Right axes. In the post-Cold War world the disintegrated and bankrupt status of the Left is surpassed only by an even worse disintegration and bankruptcy of the Right. This is why reconfiguring politics in transversal terms of a New Class vs. populism makes considerably more sense. As clearly demonstrated by the recent Italian election, even the most sophisticated Left in the West has turned out to be a bad carbon copy of the discredited bourgeois *ancien régime*. Because no major political realignment has yet taken place, however, an irreconcilably heterogeneous Left "progressive" coalition was soundly defeated by an equally irreconcilably heterogeneous Right "freedom" coalition. As a result, the political stalemate continues with the victorious side terminally torn betwen a New Class nationalist, statist and neo-fascist wing (the National Alliance), and a federalist, neo-populist wing (the Northern League). This stalemate is not likely to be resolved without a major reconfiguration of political alliances, with the old Left

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and the discredited corrupt Center redefining themselves in explicit statist or populist terms.

The predicament in the US is even worse. The old Reagan coalition has long since split asunder, leaving a neo-conservative apparatus battling a fundamendalist New Right, itself under attack from even more alienated libertarian and paleoconservative wings. Such a chaos mirrors a Left presumably comprising not only unrepentent Marxists, social democrats and authoritarian feminists à la McKinnon, but also communitarians, greens and die-hard anarchists. Nothing holds either camp together other than political nostalgia. In order to clarify this predicament Chris Woltermann analyzes "paleoconservatism," whose opposition to statism, bureaucratism and the culture industry (in favor of localism, particularity and cultural autonomy) comes surprisingly close to that Adornian wing of Critical Theory advocating similar values. In violent opposition to the technocratic New Class ideologists of linguistified Critical Theory, according to whom certified intellectuals solve the world problems by forging a consensus among themselves, such a post-Adornian approach confronts the task of identifying potential institutional frameworks within which to safeguard that particularity, specificity and otherness the older generation of critical theorists could only conceive of protecting by prefiguring a mythical *mimesis* with nature. Here Lasch's invitation to re-examine unrealized possibilities from past history is especially welcome. If the unilinear theory of progress is discarded as the poorly secularized theological illusion it always was, there should be no theoretical qualms about reconsidering allegedly transcended political models such as American or Swiss federalism. Never successfully "Americanized" and unfamiliar with the American experience and its tortuous history, Adorno & Co. could never envision such an alternative, especially during the leaden years of the Cold War. They could do little more than complain from the veranda of the infamous Hotel Abyss.

The collapse of communism has seriously destabilized Western nations whose "liberal democracy" has always been postulated on the cultural homogenization of an often arbitrarily defined national polity. As Tilman Evers shows in relation to German reunification, on closer examination the "democratic" part of "liberal democracy" is a fiction meant to legitimate New Class domination. Popular sovereignty requires that direct participatory democracy achievable only within relatively small units whose aggregations, through representative institutions such as the federation, guarantees their security, autonomy and particularity. It

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is this realization in various parts of the world which is precipitating the break-up not only of arbitrarily constituted pseudo-federal nation-states such as Yugoslavia, Czechoslovakia and the USSR, but also of solid and established political entities such as Canada and Italy. Gianfranco Miglio's outline of this "federalist revolution" readily identifies the often corrupt and always parasitic central state apparatus as the main culprit of many of today's problems. Only within a federated context will it be possible to contain a radically redimensioned central state apparatus through fiscal decentralization and political integration within a yet broader political structure such as Europe.

This revolutionary development, however, is not limited merely to the political sphere. As Dario Durando argues, it is part of a broader epochal shift into "trans-modernity." Unlike the nihilism and opportunism celebrated by post-modernity — the logical outcome of modernity — trans-modernity prefigures a post-liberal age characterized by concrete cultural identities rooted in long-standing traditions and customs. Only the latter can constitute personal identities above and beyond what the culture industry markets as the appropriate "role models" for alienated and manipulable consumers for a liberal society of interchangeable abstract individuals. It is within such a framework that Durando redefines "ethnicity" as that identity-bestowing cultural particularity able to resist and reverse the dialectic of enlightenment. While the various ethnic wars presently in progress in various parts of the world have not contributed to relegitimating "ethnicity" as a desirable framework for reconstituting personal and collective identities, unless individuals are reintegrated with their lived experience, history and culture — their ethnicity — the polis will remain the home of the likes of De Sade rather than Kant, a *bellum omnium contra omnes* rather than "the true and only heaven."

Russell Jacoby's forthcoming book, *Dogmatic Wisdom*, is likely to redirect current debates concerning the crisis in American education. Thus it deserves careful scrutiny and a critical public discussion. In order to initiate such a discussion, this issue includes one of the book's more interesting chapters, as well as a series of critical responses dealing with many of the issues he discusses. Within this context neither conservative nor liberal analyses fare very well and, worse yet, no obvious solutions are in sight. Hopefully, Jacoby's book will open a chapter of a debate in desperate need of new departures.

Paul Piccone

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What is Paleoconservatism?

Chris Woltermann

While the "paleo" in paleoconservatism leaves the impression that it arose earlier than other conservatisms, the suggestion is misleading. Despite paleoconservatism's borrowings from conservative political philosophies which predate it by, in some cases, over two millenia, it is a modern innovation scarcely two decades old. This becomes clear when one considers the slightly lengthier history of another movement, neoconservatism. Before neoconservatism there was no reason for anyone to identify oneself as a paleoconservative. Some conservatives began calling themselves paleoconservatives only after becoming aware of a gulf between their own evolving beliefs and those of self-described neoconservatives. Thus, paleoconservatism is a reaction to neoconservatism. Both are originally (although no longer exclusively) American developments reflecting the ferment within the political Right in the late 20th century.

An observer partial to paleoconservatism might describe it as the unique variety of modern conservatism that remains true to longstanding conservative principles. This claim, however, raises the question of whether there are any eternal conservative principles or whether conservatism is nothing more than a general attitude of resistance to change. If conservativism does have enduring principles, which professed conservatives adhere to them? Who are the "true" conservatives? All conservatives claim this designation. So solicitous are neoconservatives in this regard that the most prominent among them, including Jack Kemp in politics and George Will in journalism, nowadays hesitate to term themselves anything but conservatives *sic et nunc*. On the other hand, paleoconservatives, especially "their self-declared

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spokesman Patrick J. Buchanan,"[1] insist on the prefixes "paleo-" and "neo-" and thereby betray a political weakness in their struggle against neoconservatives. Blatant polemics mark both sides of this struggle. As a result, separating central from peripheral themes within either conservatism is difficult. The following analysis seeks to consider paleoconservatism in terms of its internal coherence and its consistency with traditional conservative principles. First, though, some observations about neoconservatism are required.

Neither those who became paleoconservatives nor those who arguably would have made this transition (had they lived long enough) had reason for concern when the word "neoconservative" first gained currency. An early example of the usage appears in David Spitz's *Essays in the Liberal Idea of Freedom*, an anthology of his academic articles written, for the most part, in the 1950s. According to Spitz, recognized conservative scholars such as Leo Strauss, Eric Voegelin, Walter Berns, and Bertrand de Jouvenel represent "the neo-conservative and anti-liberal camp."[2] The meaning here is unequivocal. Spitz's hyphenated "neo-conservative" refers to recent, as opposed to dated, hostility to "liberal" social progress. How Spitz could lump Strauss and Berns, mainstays of today's neoconservatism, with Voegelin and de Jouvenel, intellectual forerunners of paleoconservatism, remains a mystery. At any rate, the significance of Spitz's book lies with how it exemplifies the early meaning of neoconservatism up to the 1970s, when the term would take on a new meaning.

Gottfried's *The Conservative Movement*[3] provides an excellent account of the current meaning of neoconservatism. Although he never identifies any particular tenet as its core, one position stands out: a passionate commitment to individual human rights. It is very important for neoconservatives that the individual be as free as possible from private and governmental discrimination on the basis of race, ethnicity, gender, religious confession, language, social class, wealth, unequal opportunities, physical condition, etc. This freedom from discrimination is seen as both the framework for other long-recognized rights and the source of new ones such as access to medical services and higher education. The idea, prominent in Kemp's writings, is for individuals to be treated

1. Paul Gottfried, *The Conservative Movement: Revised Edition* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1993), p. x.

2. David Spitz, *Essays in the Liberal Idea of Freedom* (Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 1964), p. 163.

3. Gottfried, *op. cit.*, Chapter 4. This work could have been an impeccable guide to the various conservatisms were it not for the author's tendency not to see the forest for the trees. His otherwise admirable attentiveness to detail is occasionally overwhelming.

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equally, with "equally" construed quite broadly.[4]

Certain well-publicized aspects of neoconservatism are less than they appear. Consider the voluble advocacy of free-market economics. Here again Kemp typifies neoconservatives. Although he champions capitalism, market incentives and free trade, he does so because these are the best means for fostering social equality, especially equality of opportunity. Missing from the neoconservative vision is awareness of how sponsoring social equality has historically meant an increase of governmental powers and the curtailment of market efficiencies. Nothing accidental inheres in the fact that bestowing more and more rights on individuals in order to bring about human emancipation has proven to be inextricably bound with governmental aggrandizement, evidenced by the absolute and proportional growth of tax revenues and provisions by the private sector of "mandated benefits." Confronted with the political ramifications of their emphasis on human rights, neoconservatives demur by carping about the old bogeyman of big government. They call for "smaller" government to be achieved by, e.g., privatizations and volunteerism, but more sincerely count on government to provide guarantees and "empowerment" (a cherished concept among neoconservatives) as individuals reach out for additional rights, more widespread opportunities and greater equality.

The neoconservatives' approach to foreign policy follows from their domestic agenda. Everywhere they promote the contemporary Western style of representative democracy, replete with a civic culture based on individual human rights and equality. If such governance is good for Americans and West Europeans, neoconservatives contend, it is bound to be equally good for others who allegedly long for it.

Whatever else can be said about neoconservatism, it is not conservatism in any sense accepted by anyone except the neoconservatives themselves. The only qualification here is that there is a vast body of so-called scholarship, much of it by the followers of Leo Strauss, which bases the neoconservative perspective on Plato and Aristotle. Notwithstanding such dubious claims, neoconservatism is not conservative.

How conservative, then, is paleoconservatism? There is an incisive but jaundiced introduction to its central principles in Spitz' book. Prior to the advent of paleoconservatism, Spitz, a liberal partisan, discussed

4. Thus Jack Kemp, possibly the most cerebral neoconservative among American politicians, answered in the affirmative the question: "Democratic Equality: A Conservative Idea?" See Kemp's article by that title in *Intercollegiate Review*, No. 20 (Spring-Summer 1985), pp. 51-56.

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the generally conservative antipathy to "state control over the economic and social order." He wisely discerned and, with less wisdom, explicated "the most formidable" consequence of such control: "[W]ith the diminution of political controls, a society may move, if not toward anarchy, at least toward that type of individualism which may well prove destructive of the American ideal of equality of opportunity. For in the absence of political controls, private power groups are free to deprive disesteemed minorities (and even, let it be added, ineffectual majorities) of their fundamental civil and human rights."[5] Two items are noteworthy here. First, the liberalism Spitz rightly sees as antithetical to conservatism nonetheless appears as neoconservatism's identical twin. He thus confirms a salient paleoconservative charge, i.e., that neoconservatives lack any basis in principle for distinguishing themselves from any political leftists except the more unreconstructed ideologues among the Marxists. Second, there is the anti-liberal exaltation of private power in contrast to governmental power. Spitz sees this as the essence of conservatism. Although it is debatable whether he is right with respect to all conservatisms, he certainly is right when his words are read out of their 1950s' and 1960s' context and applied to paleoconservatism.

The basic and pervasive difference between neoconservatives and paleoconservatives is respectively between a commitment to individual human rights and enthusiasm for private powers. Paleoconservatives do not defend private powers as a "right" conferred by or dependent on the protection of the state. At the risk of oversimplification, the paleoconservative stance inverts the neoconservative position on rights. Although paleoconservatives appreciate individual rights, they assign primacy to private powers as the source of such rights. According to paleoconservatives, rights are conceivable only because individuals, whether singly or in groups, can enforce them against other private parties and government itself. These are the only rights government must respect. From the paleoconservative viewpoint, the opposing neoconservative understanding of rights degrades them to "social grants"[6] made by government or privileges precariously maintained under "government licenses."[7]

Paleoconservatives' hostility to neoconservatism follows from their general aversion to modernism. In other words, paleoconservatives are

5. Spitz, *op. cit.*, p. 139.

6. Bertrand de Jouvenel, *Sovereignty: An Inquiry into the Political Good*, tr. by J. F. Huntington (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1957), p. 255.

7. Jonathan Rauch, "Foe of Free Speech Shoots Mouth Off," *The Wall Street Journal*, October 13, 1993, Midwest edition, p. A18.

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profoundly counter-cultural. They therefore are open to several facile criticisms: 1) paleoconservatives are either closet anarchists, since they hate government so intensely, or liars in that they disingenuously rely on government to enforce more than a few individual rights (such as private propety); 2) moral considerations, especially Judeo-Christian ones, have no place in paleoconservatism, whose only "ethic" permits and even exhorts the strong to oppress the weak; 3) paleoconservatism is elitist, which raises the question of the nature of the elite; and 4) paleoconservatives cannot translate their beliefs into responsible policies. There is no better way to probe paleoconservatism's intricacies than by weighing these criticisms.

The first criticism is a ruse by neoconservative social democratic opponents. Few if any paleoconservatives avow anarchy. By default, then, they seemingly must either abjure a generic defense of private powers or else prevaricate. Paleoconservatives, however, have the better alternative of pointing out that the absence of coercive government does not necessarily make for social chaos. Historical precedents abound. In the earliest period of ancient Rome, for example, a patrician was at liberty to do literally anything, even kill one of his fellows. Yet, anti-social acts were relatively rare (and, if a killing did occur, the resulting conflict, possibly violent, between the families of the killer and the victim would prompt no greater governmental involvement than royal mediation; Romans did not permit government to dictate the actions of free men). The situation was similar in feudal societies where a baron could lawfully offer armed resistance to a royal court's decision. The fact that Roman and medieval societies did not collapse into anarchy reflected the effectiveness of folkways and mores in sustaining social cohesion. Paleoconservatives prefer such cultural restraints on behavior to governmental restraints. They do not, however, advocate a return to ancient or medieval institutions and political theory.

Many paleoconservatives' strongest intellectual ties are rather to 18th century British Whig liberalism and its continental and American counterparts. Called bourgeois liberalism by Marxists, this original or classical liberalism bears more than a superficial resemblance to ancient and medieval constitutionalisms. In every case, government respected powerful private interests. It posed as neither their source nor their master; it was not even, strictly speaking, their protector. Government's coercive power, which was indeed ostensibly protective of private interests, in reality functioned merely to maintain "the rules of the game" — the rule of law — which those interests had long accepted and continued to accept as fitting and proper.

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Paleoconservatives know all too well that having society organized pursuant to the powers of private interests works best when there is a high degree of consensus concerning values. In modern societies such culturally specific harmony becomes increasingly less regulative as each individual is encouraged to seek his own way. Abstractly and collectively, self-actualizing individuals are as much the allies of powerful, modernizing and "liberating" governments as they are the enemies of both powerful private interests and paleoconservatives. Actually, the charge of anarchism can be leveled more effectively against neoconservatives and social democrats. Paleoconservatives such as Pat Buchanan and Samuel Francis delight in denouncing today's growing anarchy, evidenced most graphically by murders and gang violence in American cities. Most observers agree that the cause of the problem is cultural decline, especially the breakdown of the family and the fading of culturally inculcated internal curbs on deviant behavior. Cultural decline is a feature of liberalism which neoconservatives can only bemoan in rhetoric. At heart, they are modernists comfortable with such concepts as liberation, empowerment, and self-actualization.

As for the second criticism, i.e., that paleoconservatives are amoral, the accusation is absurd. Paleoconservatives' stress on the normative consensus necessary to preserve a society in the absence of strong government arguably exceeds the moral concern of any other political group. The proper charge may be that paleoconservatives relativize morality. They allegedly preach relativism by calling excessive attention to morality as a cultural phenomenon. So consistent are paleoconservatives in this regard that they dismiss as idle chatter all talk about "natural" human rights. The obvious paleoconservative explanation is twofold: 1) although platitudinous generalizations about transcultural rights have won widespread approbation, agreement on the substance of what such rights concretely mean proves elusive and 2) if any rights were truly "natural," they would not require government's compulsion to enforce them.

From the paleoconservative perspective, the most dangerous enemies of morality are modernists who foster the apotheosis of a "just" and "compassionate" government. To the extent that most Western countries have successfully established such governments, individuals and groups tend to feel relieved of the need to act justly and compassionately in their private capacities. With the growth of the welfare state, individuals are freed of the need to be provident on their own behalf and to care for their neighbors. Such "progress" arouses indignation

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among paleoconservatives who recognize that the essence of moral behavior is responsibility, which involves power, to act morally. The responsibility in question must either rest in private hands or gravitate to the government.

Paleoconservatives aver that the Judeo-Christian tradition flourished for many centuries when governments were weak and private power centers (including, *inter alia*, the Catholic Church and, later, various Protestant churches) waxed strong. Nowadays, however, many religious people call for socially activist government to implement the so-called Social Gospel. These proponents of the Social Gospel pose a serious challenge to paleoconservatism; they aim less to have government found a moral social order than to enlist government's help in spreading individual responsibility for moral behavior. Government, it is argued, can serve this end by subduing powerful social elites. With the removal of elitist social controls, and with responsibility and power more widespread, the Judeo-Christian tradition might thrive as never before on the basis of autonomous individual consciences.

This scenario prompts inquiry into the third criticism of paleoconservatives, the charge of elitism, which is best answered by admitting its truth while rejecting any suggestion of odium. Elitist though paleoconservatives are, they are no more so than moralists who profess to abhor elitism. Powerful people with moral authority and/or commanding the means of physical coercion and economic power exist in any society. The question is which elite dominates: a proud, private one or a no less proud, even impudent, statist one ensconced in government. Although private elites have often denied to people of low social status the power to run their own lives, the record of modern welfare bureaucracies is no better. It is true that government, the natural enemy of every private elite, is the "acid" that dissolves privately enforced social structures into detached human molecules. Such "liberation," however, allows a new, statist elite to control ("serve" is the preferred euphemism) isolated individuals more completely than any private elite ever ruled their ancestors.

Upon whom, then, should moralists rely to elevate the downtrodden? Paleoconservatives look to the wielders of private powers; social democrats and American liberals work to augment the power of government; neo-conservatives, who at this juncture are at their vocal best recommending market-based solutions, throw their support behind government just strong enough, which is very strong indeed, to oversee "*managed* competition." While social democrats and American liberals

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are perennial optimists as they engage in politics, and while neoconservatives fortify themselves with bouts of nervous optimism, paleoconservatives approach politics with a justified sense of pessimism. History is against them, and they know it. But appreciating their position in history seldom moves paleoconservatives toward political quiescence. Rather than stew in their pessimistic juices, they prefer to take action. Whether or not they can further a realistic paleoconservative agenda, however, is another question. Is it true, as the fourth criticism maintains, that they cannot incorporate paleoconservatism into practical politics? To the dismay of paleoconservatives, and often in the face of their denials, their efficacy is severely limited.

Paleoconservatives can and do prove politically effective in retarding the growth of government, which would otherwise grow larger more quickly in the "service" of individual empowerment and self-actualization. Modernism remains at history's cutting edge, but paleoconservative resistance sometimes makes the going slow. One often successful tactic is to instigate the reversal of changes not yet sufficiently institutionalized. A paleoconservatism modestly confined to retarding modernism is obviously conservative in etymological and conventional senses. It is also an honorable undertaking. No less a person than Jean-Jacques Rousseau defended its inherent decency. Offering a third-person synopsis of his intended impact on politics, Rousseau wrote: "His object could not be to recall populous countries and large states to their primitive simplicity, but only to check, if possible, the progress of those whom smallness and situation had preserved from the same headlong rush to the perfection of society and the deterioration of the species."[8] Despite Rousseau's reputation as a "progressive," his ethos was quintessentially conservative.

The paleoconservative version of the mistake of trying "to recall populous countries . . . to their primitive simplicity" is a misbegotten attempt to transform resistance into a strategy for governance. Many paleoconservatives, including Buchanan and Francis, seem disposed to blunder in precisely this way. Aiming to build a broad base of support for paleoconservatism, Buchanan works to build and lead a unified conservative movement with sufficient electoral strength to win control of the US government. His ultimate goal is to conclude the so-called culture wars by having a newly elected government restore paleoconservative values. In

8. Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Rousseau Juge de Jean-Jacques*, third dialogue. Quoted by de Jouvenel in *Sovereignty*, *op. cit.*, p. 136.

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the same vein, Francis calls for a right-wing or conservative welfare state which would appeal to a supposed majority of American voters having both conservative social values and enthusiasm for the social welfare aspects of social democracy.[9] Behind Buchanan's and Francis' pronouncements, as well as the largely compatible ones of several more scholarly authors,[10] lies the belief that tomorrow's winning politicians will be those astute enough to move socially to the Right and economically to the Left. Such politicians will offer the vision of invigorated traditional values gaining ascendancy in the wake of a more equitable distribution of wealth.

This selective reversal of modernism is sheer fantasy. Social welfare policies lend themselves far more readily to programmatic satisfaction than does cultural conservatism. Consequently, even assuming the victory of a "welfare paleoconservatism" at the polls, socialist economics rather than a traditionalist society would ensue. Modernism does not consist of discrete components, more or less analogous to the individual items in a supermarket's inventory, from which customers can select only left-wing economic measures while leaving all else on the shelf. A paleoconservatively effective government, as opposed to resistance to the growth of government, is unfeasible because it would have to be more radically countercultural than its proponents dare admit. Paleoconservatives, who emphasize the cultural context of political institutions, should be sensitive to this consideration. That many are not reflects their rather confused understanding of democracy.

The historical and cultural aspects of modern mass democracy have at least as much significance as its more familiar procedural aspects. Part and parcel of the political and cultural changes paleoconservatives detest, mass democracy manifests itself in history as the transgenerational process whereby modernists govern people in furtherance of the modernist cause — what Ferdinand Tönnies identified as the Enlightenment's legacy of "rationalism and progress."[11] Even when elections do not put

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9. Samuel Francis, *Beautiful Losers: Essays on the Failure of American Conservatism* (Columbia, Mo.: University of Missouri Press, 1993). Hints of Francis' perchant for fusing conservative social values with the welfare state already appear in his contribution to Robert W. Whitaker, ed., *The New Right Papers* (New York: St.Martin's Press, 1982), pp. 64-83.

10. Christopher Lasch, *The True and Only Heaven: Progress and Its Critics* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1991); and Kevin P. Phillips, *The Emerging Republican Majority* (New Rochelle, N.Y.: Arlington House, 1969).

11. Ferdinand Tönnies, "Historicism, Rationalism, and the Industrial System," in Werner J. Cahnman and Rudolph Heberle, eds., *Ferdinand Tönnies on Sociology: Pure, Applied, and Empirical*, tr. by Ursula Fritzsche, with Werner J. Cahnman, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1971), p. 275.

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modernists in positions of authority, mass democracy nevertheless advances modernism. This empirical interpretation of mass democracy distinguishes between "really existing" people and the mythological self-governing "the people." Most real people experience democracy not as governing, but as being governed. The realization is especially acute when many people are, in Tönnies' words, "provincial, immature, uneducated"[12] — socially conservative, in the language of today's paleoconservatives — and resentful of ruling modernists. From the latter's perspective, popular resentment is an administrative problem calling for political chicanery (to win elections) and public enlightenment through social therapy (to lessen or eliminate the need for chicanery).

Although, as all paleoconservatives admit, mass democracy can only exist in particular cultural contexts, it nevertheless functions, as some paleoconservatives deny, to diminish cultural specificity. Mass democracy achieves "anticultural" victories which supplant provincial usages with cosmopolitan practices, immaturity with the maturity of openness to self-actualization, intellectual simplicity with philosophical skepticism, culturally defined civic rights with universal human rights and the sweep of private powers with far-reaching government. Mass democracy operates humanely; it assures that as few "provincials" as possible need be dragged "kicking and screaming," as it were, to "rationalism and progress." Elections are important, not to enable voters to set their own course, but so that modernists can engineer consent and, in the aftermaths of elections, stifle the more disruptive forms of dissent by claiming that dissidents have already had the chance to participate.[13]

Paleoconservatives such as Buchanan and Francis have a millenarian streak which allows them to anticipate a radical transformation of elections. For the first time since modern mass democracy emerged following the Enlightenment, elections are to become something other than an adjunct of modernism. The governed American people will somehow reconstitute themselves as the self-governing "the people" and change elections into the means to effect a grand reversal of modernism's

12. Ferdinand Tönnies, *Community and Society*, tr. and ed. by Charles P. Loomis (New York: Harper & Row, 1963), p. 168.

13. Cf. the novelist Giusseppe di Lampedusa's description of poor, conservative Sicilians reacting to the 1860 plebiscite which abolished the Sicilian monarchy and merged the kingdom with a united Italy: "Six months before they used to hear a rough despotic voice saying, 'Do what I say or you'll catch it!' Now there was an impression already of such a threat being replaced by the soapy tones of a moneylender: 'But you signed it yourself. didn't you? Can't you see? It's quite clear. You must do as we say, for here are the I.O.U.s; your will is identical with mine'." Giusseppe di Lampedusa, *The Leopard*, tr. by Archibald Colquhoun (New York: Time Incorporated, 1966), p. 112.

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eclipse of traditional values. Extremely strong government, its strength derived from "the people," will arise and force paleoconservative values on the still powerful but "reactionary" modernists. Through a feat of typically chiliastic legerdemain, however, the resultant paleoconservative welfare state will not impede resurgent private interests. These will "freely" accommodate one another thanks to the welfare state's preternaturally unintrusive bureaucracy All of this is to occur because "the people" will "rise up and take back their government." Such "conservative" millenarianism should be an embarrassment to any thinking person.

Both among paleoconservatives and between them and their critics, discussions of first principles — e.g., culture, modernism, rights versus private powers, etc. — receive relatively little attention. The emphasis is rather on specific paleoconservative policy recommendations. As contentious as the notion of "welfare conservatism," these have aroused much criticism.

Buchanan's proposal to either totally or largely close the US to immigrants not of European culture serves as the lightning rod for other paleoconservative policy recommendations. Taken at its best, which Buchanan's rhetoric often makes difficult, this proposal aims merely to retard modernism. Free or liberal immigration threatens cultural specificity, something that paleoconservatives value both in itself and because it precludes the need for distended government to guarantee individual rights across cultural lines. Custom and comity, rather than government's heavy hand, can uphold sociality to the degree that a society remains culturally homogeneous. To be fair to Buchanan, his immigration policy is no more than ethnocentric; it is not necessarily racist nor does it logically entail Jacobin ideas of nationalism. But the strict logic of Buchanan's position may be irrelevant. In practice, given the American context, even a principled ethnocentrism has a tendency to degenerate into xenophobia, nativism and crude racism. This tendency might well grow more pronounced if Buchananite immigration laws were enacted. Directed against new immigrants (i.e., Mexicans, Jamaicans, Asians, etc.), such laws could readily catalyze nativist reactions to the "nontraditional" immigrants and their progeny already in the US.

The America-first foreign policy of Buchanan and his supporters presents its own difficulties. To the extent that it is divorced from paleoconservatives' stubborn nationalism, it is neither objectionable nor distinctly paleoconservative. It is simply a modest foreign policy opposed to exporting worn-out American liberalism to foreigners who will, in any case, go their own way regardless of the State Department's

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liberal (or neoconservative) efforts to Americanize their supposedly defective institutions. Americans should, paleoconservatives contend, "put America first" by pursuing a foreign policy of advancing conventionally and fairly narrowly defined American interests. The principal problem with this recommendation is that most paleoconservatives refuse to quarantine it from their nationalistic daydreams.

Thoughtful paleoconservatives will find an even greater problem in Buchanan's calls for protectionist measures to shelter particular American industries and their workers from international competition. Such protectionism is too statist to fit paleoconservatism's aversion to seeing private interests turned into wards of government. Although protectionism can be targeted to arresting cultural decline by halting the economic decline, ostensibly caused by free trade, said to be behind it, Buchanan seems almost willfully unaware of how protectionism usually diminishes the well-being of its intended beneficiaries. A separate consideration, which should prove especially irksome to Buchanan's supporters, is that existing protectionist measures aimed at countries such as Haiti and Jamaica stimulate the immigration of non-Europeans to the US. Protectionist rhetoric can attract popular support to the paleoconservative side. Yet protectionism itself is not paleoconservative.

Even more problematic is Buchanan's and generally all American paleoconservatives' support for traditional Judeo-Christian values. Aware of the problem, members of the religious Right and paleoconservatives view one another warily despite their compatibility on matters such as moral permissiveness. Religious rightists correctly distrust paleoconservatives for their emphasis, however qualified by personal religious proclivities, on America's Judeo-Christian tradition as a cultural datum embedded in a specific historical context. Similarly, paleoconservatives distrust religious rightists for both their differences among themselves and the frequent failure of their interpretation of transcendent exigencies (e.g., God's will) to prevent them from making statist recommendations (e.g., for protecting the family) which paleoconservatives, except in their opportunistic moments, almost instinctively reject. Their distance from religious rightists marks paleoconservatives as ideologues advocating merely paleoconservatism rather than some transcendent principle as their standard. In this important respect, paleoconservatism is a modern phenomenon shaped by philosophical skepticism. Paleoconservatives have not escaped the Enlightenment's influence. In fact, they would probably have called themselves "neoconservatives" if that label had not already been claimed by charlatans.

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*The Rediscovery of Ethnic Identity**

Dario Durando

The monumental events following the fall of the Berlin Wall (November 9, 1989) and the formal dissolution of the Soviet Union (December 25, 1991) brought about a radically new geopolitical order. They meant not only the end of the bipolar world and the partition of Europe as a result of the Yalta and Postdam agreements, but also the exhaustion of a turbulent cycle more than 70 years old, which defined a century of unprecedented violence. The end of this terrible period does not mean the "end of history" or the disappearance of force in relations between states. It does imply, however, a redefinition of those geopolitical relations leading to a more general evolution of thought and custom.

What is developing in social and political relations — especially at the international level — is a trans-modern *Weltanschauung* which approaches problems of state and society very differently from the way they have been dealt with in the 20th century. One of the characteristics of this new *Weltanschauung* is the rediscovery of values linked to "ethnic" identity (understood primarily in a cultural as opposed to a biological sense).

A New Trans-Modern International System

These new developments have been described as "a civilization of international politics."[1] While this characterization conceals questionable

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1. Hanns W. Maull, "Zivilmacht Bundesrepublik Deutchland. Vierzehn Thesen für eine neue deutsche Aussenpolitik," in *Europa-Archiv*, No. 10 (1992), p. 269ff.

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utopian features, it corresponds to actual international developments:

1) The growing abrogation of the traditional principle of international law concerning unlimited sovereignty within state borders. Specifically, there is a tendency by the international community to exercise a kind of stewardship to safeguard human rights.

2) Efforts to constitute a "new world order" based on the consensus of all the subjects of international relations, all having their own intrinsically "democratic" legitimacy. The US seems to have relatively clear ideas about the configuration of a "new world order." It is unlikely that these ideas, which presuppose the retention and strengthening of American hegemony, will be appreciated by the Europeans and the Japanese. It is clear, however, that the disintegration of the old bipolar order will have to be followed by a new system of international relations.

3) The use of collective military force (within the framework of the UN, EC or CSCE) for peace-keeping. The fact that European political elites have proven pathetically unequal to the task in the former Yugoslavia does not rule out the need for military intervention in various situations to prevent violations of human rights and contain violence.

4) The displacement of the narrow concept of national security — the legacy of 18th and 19th century power politics — in favor of collective defense or, rather, collective security (since it is inconceivable that today any state other than the US could meet its security requirements by itself or within the context of a system of traditional alliances).

5) Finally, the gradual shift of sovereignty from national states to supra-national organizations, and an attendant acceptance of limitations of a contractual nature on the exercise of sovereignty.

During the last few years there has been a transformation of the international community from a Hobbesian array of entities permanently on a war-footing to a "society" of states sharing some principles and seeking, even if very gradually, to impose normative behavioral standards. Although the dissolution of a 40-year old order creates more problems than it solves and is a slow and difficult process, it now seems irreversible. This is because it is a process determined not by endogenous causes of the international system but by a more general and pervasive evolution that could be designated as the *shift to the trans-modern age*.[2]

2. Here "trans-modern" refers to the predicament resulting from the collapse of "modernity" (based on Enlightenment bourgeois values, an industrial economy and political and economic liberalism); while "post-modern" designates those social and cultural phenomena that are the end product of "modern civilization" and not part of its overcoming. On "post-modernity" as the mere dissolution of modernity, see Gianfranco Morra, *Il Quarto uomo. Postmodernità o Crisi della Modernità* (Rome: Armando, 1992), p. 22:

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This trans-modern age does not recognize social and political dogma — great collective objectives based on mythical-symbolic foundations ("the fatherland" or "the proletariat") and focused on limited areas of human experience related to individual behavior: well-being, hedonistic concerns and, more generally, the free development of the individual personality. It involves things which in various ways are crucial precisely because they are the presuppositions of pressing individual concerns, i.e., ecological awareness, the needs of the weak, the rejection of imperialism and belligerent attitudes, the overbearing desire for "good administration" and more direct political participation. This explains, among other things, the explosive electoral growth of the Northern League in Italy.

The Threat of a Universal Standardization

The other side of this coin is the absolute emptiness of "postmodernity" and the dissolution of monadic states armed against each other. This process goes hand in hand, not only with a growing internationalization of the economy but with the globalization of culture (in turn generated by a growing interpenetration of axiological constellations). The result is the often denounced threat[3] of the global adoption of the prevailing cultural model — the American model, which is hegemonic to the extent that it emanates from the richest society and the most prosperous economy.[4] This adoption translates into a "cosmopolitan" homogeneity in Spengler's sense: empty, false and superficial.[5] To use an abused but vivid metaphor, it translates into a "global EuroDisney," i.e., the triumph of that abstract ahistorical universalism rooted in the Enlightenment.[6]

The result is a world reduced to an immense market unified by the flow of goods, services and capital. It is culturally standardized because it is permeated by a global informational network that is a product of the hegemonic Anglo-Saxon culture industry, and it transmits with enormous symbolic impact the values of a consumer society. Politically, it

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3. See Serge Latouche, *L'Occidentalizzazione del Mondo. Saggio sul Significato, la Portata e i Limiti dell'Uniformazione Planetaria* (Turin: Bollati Boringhieri, 1992).

4. On symptoms of US cultural, economic and social decline, see Roberto Menotti, "Il Dibattito sul 'Declino Americano'," in *Politica Internazionale*, Nos. 1-2 (1992) p. 115 ff.

5. See Oswald Spengler, *Il Tramonto dell'Occidente* (Milan: Longanesi, 1981), p. 922.

6. See Carlo Gambescia, "Comunitarismo contro Universalismo. Per una Critica del Paradigma Occidentale della Modernizzazione," in *Trasgressioni*, No. 14 (January-April 1992), p. 22ff.

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is structured hierarchically with the US at the head, always ready to brandish Theodore Roosevelt's famous big stick.

Ethnic Differences as Sources of Identity

The shift towards trans-modernity constitutes an irreversible historical process of the same magnitude as industrialization (which it mirrors, to the extent that the main characteristic of trans-modernity on the socio-economic level is the centrality of services based on information). The opposite can be said of the subjugation of the entire planet to a post-modern ideology that sees the economy as the foundation of the human condition, and differences or cultural specifities as minor and bizarre deviations from a global social "normality." These differences and specificities, however, constitute the most powerful obstacle to the diffusion of the universalist and economistic ideology, and to the transformation of the world in its image.

Cultural specificity is *ethnic* in character and must be approached in the context of an organized opposition to universal standardization. Here the anthropological and biological component of ethnicity is secondary, because it is irrelevant in social interactions. What is important is something else: *the sense of ethnic belonging*, i.e., an ethnic identification generated by a specific system of cultural production, cemented by a common language among the members of an ethnic group.[7] What is important about the ethnic dimension within the context of the contemporary global society is its ability to provide a "source of identity" — a mechanism of identification based primarily on cultural and linguistic belonging, and only secondarily on a "blood-community." In other words, ethnic belonging is the ultimate form of generalized interpersonal solidarity and therefore the utmost instance of the "communitarian" and organic type of link described by Ferdinand Tönnies.[8]

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7. Although somewhat dated, Anthony Smith's definition of "ethnic community," originally formulated in 1981, remains useful. See *Il Revival Etnico* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1984) p.114.: "A social group whose members share a sense of common origins, claim an historical past, and a common and distinctive destiny, possess one or more peculiar attributes, and perceive a sense of collective unity and solidarity." Naturally, one of the "primordial" bonds for the formation of a sense of ethnic community is language. On "ethno-politics," see James Kellas, *Nazionalismi ed Etnie* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1993).

8. Recall the distinction between community and society outlined at the beginning of the second chapter of his famous work: "The theory of society moves from the construction of a group of men who, as in the community, live and dwell peacefully one next to other, no longer essentially bound, but separated. They are separated despite all the bonds. In the community they remain bound despite all the separations." See Ferdinand Tönnies, *Comunità e Società* (Milan: Comunità, 1963), p. 83.

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The rooting of the individual within a "communitarian" environment characterized by strong linguistic and cultural ties represents the most effective antidote to the atomization and "anomie" typical of societies that Tönnies and Durkheim classified as "mechanistic" and which today could be called *post-modern*: *unified* at a global, *artificial* level because grounded in a self-producing society, *directed* from the center of production of culture and information. In this global society the individual is increasingly alone. He is lost in the immensity of the social environment and exposed to an uninterrupted flow of information — usually the product of other information. He is becoming less and less able to determine his own destiny and remains manipulated by those who hold the supreme power: the circulation of information.

The communitarian bonds peculiar to ethnic belonging are radically opposed to all these aspects of the globalized society. The experience of ethnicity reestablishes the individual at the center of a network of direct and immediate social relations — immediate as the community of culture, tradition and language. It allows the recovery of contact with reality, beyond the mediating veil of self-perpetuating global information. It minimizes the influence of extraneous decisional powers to the ethnic communion and therefore allows for a more substantial participation by the single individual in processes of collective will formation.

Consequently, the so-called ethnic *revival*, the reappropriation by various ethnic groups of their own identity, the reevaluation of the "roots" of people and communities (i.e., the distinctive traits of their specific cultures), constitutes the most powerful weapon against global levelling — the obliteration of differences, the depersonalizing fusion typical of "the melting pot" of global society. It is a powerful weapon against the universalist ideology of post-modernity, mythologized by the followers of so-called "weak thought."

Furthermore, if the rediscovery of the ethnic dimension means *bringing the individual back in the center of social relations* (as the actor of richer interpersonal relations, the subject interacting with a reality *in fieri*, and as the "citizen" actively involved in the decision-making process of his own community), how can it be denied that he is in step with the tendency of trans-modernity to center all aspects of reality around individual experience and to minimize, if not suppress, external conditioning? The specific line of development of a trans-modern approach can be seen as constituted precisely by the rediscovery of ethnicity: the "*ethnic*" — and therefore *federalist* and *autonomist* — revolution as a

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global alternative to the crisis of the old order and to the threat of a new "post-modern" order that would obliterate all differences.

The Ethnic Revolution and the Shift to Trans-Modernity

Thanks to the resources they distribute, contemporary systems stimulate in individuals and groups the need for self-realization, communication and appropriation of the meaning of action, but they also expose them to fragmentation and conformity.[9] Traditional solidarity, ethnic identification and the particularism of language and culture can satisfy the needs of individuals and groups to assert their own difference in a context characterized by strongly impersonal social relations governed by the logic of organizations. Primary belonging and "birthplace" are brought into play in opposition to mass culture. Ethnic identity offers individuals and groups considerable certainty in an uncertain world. If territory is added to ethnicity, together they constitute the deepest dimensions of human experience. Birthplace not only has the power of tradition on its side, it counts on an even deeper bond in which biology and history combine. This is why the combination of ethnicity and territory has the explosive power to mobilize the innermost energies. While the other criteria of belonging weaken and recede, ethnic solidarity answers a need for a primarily symbolic identity. It provides roots that have all the consistency of language, culture, and ancient history. The innovative component of national-ethnic identity has a peculiarly cultural character because the ethnic-territorial appeal challenges complex society concerning fundamental questions such as the direction of change as well as the production of identity and meaning.

Rooted in a heritage of relations and social symbols, difference addresses the whole of society about one of its radical dilemmas: how to save the meaning of human actions and the richness of diversity in a global context. Traditional language opposes the aseptic functionality of technological language and the newspeak of informatic language and advertisement. It articulates the many facets of human experience, the various nuances that have been sedimented in the deepest layers of human culture. The loss of this wealth is the loss of humanity as such. To this extent, national-ethnic movements speak for everyone — fortunately, still in their own language.

A broad survey of the different approaches to the problem of ethnicity

9. Paraphrased from Alberto Melucci and Mario Dani, *Nazioni senza Stato. I Movimenti Etnico-Nazionali in Occidente* (Milan: Feltrinelli, 1992) p. 184-96. The two authors have grasped with remarkable lucidity the liberating essence of the ethnic revival.

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has recently concluded that the classical view, according to which ethnicity is nothing but a "residual phenomenon in the transition from tradition to modernity" and is therefore destined to succumb to the inexorable advance of "secularization," is wrong and should be abandoned. On the contrary, "divisions, political mobilization and broad forms of social organization predicated on ethnic bases are not a residual phenomenon but will continue to have an important role in processes of collective mobilization and in systems of action. Their importance in industrialized society will increase. They must be considered as constitutive elements of these societies."[10] Thus it is necessary to start thinking in terms of *ethno-territorial pluralism*. It is illogical to go from the state, the nation and the "people" to the individual and to say that the ethnic communities within them do not count. It is unfair to accept or assume status and rights for states, nations and "peoples," and refuse them to historically-grounded ethnic communities.[11]

The goal must be to preserve, redefine and empower concrete and visible reference points — ethnic formations as sources of symbolic identity and of a strong sense of belonging — between the individual and the vast "uniform" expanse of global society.

Ethnic Groups and Abstract Jacobinism

The term "ethnic group" is used here to designate certain biological, linguistic, cultural and territorial realities in order to avoid the word "nation" — a concept vitiated by terminological ambiguities. These ambiguities are a result of the fact that during the 19th and 20th centuries bourgeois ideologies have abusively applied the label of nation (which could be regarded as a synonym for "ethnic group" since the etymology refers simply to birthplace) to something other than the single ethnic group or nation. The nation of the Jacobins, the romanticists and finally the nationalists refers to the majoritarian ethnic group, or the hegemonic one which, through military power, conquers, dominates and often assimilates other ethnic groups. This was not just the case in France, but also in Spain, where for centuries what passed as Spanish (i.e., Castilian) was actually Galician, Catalan or even Basque.

Things are more complex, but it is sufficient to point out that ethnic

10. Daniele Petrosino, *Stati Nazioni Etnie. Il Pluralismo Etnico e Nazionale nella Teoria Sociologica Contemporanea* (Milan 1991), pp. 19 and 173.

11. V. Van Dyke, "The Individual, the State, and the Ethnic Communities in Political Theory," in *World Politics*, Vol. XXIX (1977), p. 369. Cited in Petrasino, *op.cit.*, p. 203.

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groups here mean communities founded primarily on cultural, linguistic and territorial ties — the culture of Bretons and not the one which, emanating over the centuries from the Ile de France, became hegemonic in Bretagne; the language spoken in Barcelona, not the one still imposed by law as recently as 15 years ago; the territory of the island called Ireland, not the two distinct sections in which it is still divided today.

In some cases, of course, an ethnic group may indeed correspond to a nation in the 19th century Jacobin sense (such as, e.g., Portugal and Denmark). One must, however, keep in mind that the relation between an ethnic group and the nation, and therefore the relation between an ethnic group and the *unitary nation-state*, is not obvious. Not only can a state be multiethnic (e.g., Switzerland), but it can be so without admitting it (as in the case of France which, until very recently, did not even recognize the diversity of Corsica[12]), or admit it without drawing any consequences (as in the case of the United Kingdom, which does not deny the existence of a distinct Scottish and Welsh ethnic group, but would never dream of granting them any kind of autonomy).

Federalism, Regionalism and Independence

The rediscovery of a sense of ethnic belonging that reflects the individual's need for identity in today's atomized society is the first and most important step in contraposing the culture of differences and specificities to the universalistic and standardizing ideology of postmodernity (exemplified by the ubiquity of American audiovisual production). But where and how does the rediscovered and revitalized (or simply preserved) ethnic dimension fit in relations between states, nations and peoples? What place should ethnic groups occupy in the context of the new inter-state order that sooner or later will have to be built on the ruins of the old one?

The preservation of ethnic identity does not necessarily mean self-determination. It does not mean the uncontrolled proliferation of state entities predicated on mono-ethnic bases so as to turn the entire planet into an immense patchwork of small states, more or less ethnically "pure" and protected by external barriers and reciprocal defenses.

12. France still officially rejects the concept of "Corsican people within the context of the French people." See the decision of the *Conseil Constitutionel* n. 91-290 DC of May 9, 1991, that struck down as unconstitutional Article 1 of a bill on Corsican autonomy (now law n. 91-428, May 13, 1991), which used this designation. See Edmond Jouve, *Relations Internationales* (Paris 1992) p. 170 ff.

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This would not be a world society, global in dimensions and objectives but richly articulated with a flourishing of different experiences and particularities. Rather, it would be a bad replica of the 19th century system of nation-states, suspicious of each other and ready to go to war whenever border disputes arise.

Every ethnic group has to occupy its place in the community of peoples — the place which history, geography and the dynamics of inter-cultural relations has reserved for it. More concretely, there are (and they are the most numerous) ethnic groups that constitute historically and culturally the hegemonic core (i.e., the nation in the Jacobin sense) of a "national unitary state" whose 19th century model still prevails.

French ethnic groups (Bretons, Flemish, Alsatians, Provençals) and Italian ones (Sardinians, Northerners belonging to the Italo-Gallic dialec, Ligurians, Piedmontese, Lombards, Northerners belonging to the Venetian group with Friulan — South Tyrolians being something entirely different) clearly can only be located within the state to which they actually belong, whose structure has to be transformed in a federalist direction in order to allow each of them to preserve their cultural and linguistic characteristics (which, among other things, translates into a contribution to the cultural wealth and diversity of "French people," "Italian people" etc.).

Within the context of the existing unitary states, federalism is the most advisable solution for the protection and development of ethnic specificities. It is a matter of a development particularly suitable for Italy, where the aquisition of a common language (obtained probably at the price of a substantial cultural impoverishment) cannot hide the significant differences among the various ethnic components of the "Italian Nation." These are the result of the thousands of years that preceded the hasty centralist unification modeled on the the French experience. However, while an openly federalist proposal is always preferable in the abstract, it is clear that in countries such as France — with a multi-secular centralizing tradition — it does not have any chance of being considered for many generations to come. There, the proper model must be different and less ambitious: it will be a matter of *regionalism* — a concept much more advanced than the actual division of the "Hexagon" in regions predicated merely on administrative decentralization. It will require an effort to make regions coincide with actual cultural and historical realities. There has recently been a proposal from groups extraneous to Savoyard autonomist groups to reunite the two departments of Savoy as an autonomous region which would

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reconstitute the territorial unity that lasted until 1860. It would also involve a transfer of power to the regions, no less important than that enjoyed by the Italian regions with special status.

A third and still different situation: ethnic groups that, because of anthropological, cultural and linguistic characteristics profoundly different from those of the hegemonic nation of which they historically have been a part, and because of the strength of their roots in a given territory, can and must legitimately aim toward some form of self-government within a continuum that ranges from being part of a federal state (renouncing sovereignty only in foreign policy and security) to a confederation of sovereign states, to pure and simple *independence*. The Scots and the Basques belong in this category (in the same way that Slovenians, Croats and Slovaks have opted for total independence). As in the case of France, a note of caution is in order here. Since independence is highly unlikely, the defense and development of ethnic identity should be entrusted to less extreme means — a hypothetical federal status for the Basque region, a semi-federal regional autonomy for Scotland (the *devolution* conservative governments stubbornly oppose).

There is yet another typology: *trans-frontier cooperation* among ethnic entities within the context of federal or at least regionalized states. It is a matter of relegating to local self-government, based on partial federal sovereignty or regional autonomy, further power to regulate matters through norms generated by "trans-frontier" agreements with federal states or regions belonging to other sovereign subjects.[13] At issue are those matters with trans-frontier relevance, i.e., major infrastructures, particularly in transportation, the environment, the exploitation of water resources, etc. Such an institutional framework is already provided by the "European General Covenant Convention," signed in Madrid May 21, 1980 dealing with trans-frontier or territorial collectivities and authorities promoted by the Council of Europe.[14]

13. It is quite normal that confederate states maintain "sovereign" powers even in matters of international relations, as in the case of the Swiss Cantons, according to Article 9 of the federal constitution.

14. With regard to the cultural roots of the political and institutional concept of "trans-frontier cooperation," an obvious case is that of the Western Alps. It is appropriate to quote here an academic with no "separatist" sympathies, who was also a member of the Italian Parliament for the Italian Republican Party: "The long common vicissitudes which brought together Piedmont and Savoy demonstrates that the real Europe, the one of the people, can be created. A Europe beyond treaties and parliaments, which would become a meeting place in mutual dignity and freedom for all the small homelands of the West, which the national states have coerced with considerable violence." See Luigi Firpo, *Gente di Piemonte* (Milan 1993), p. 8.

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The European Federation as a Common House of European Peoples

For Europeans the only institutional framework within which the recovery of ethnic belonging can take place is a federal one. The present evolution towards such an order undoubtedly will not produce immediate results because of considerable internal opposition. Yet this evolution ultimately will overcome (probably well into the 21st century) all obstacles because only a broad continental aggregation with enormous economic, financial and cultural resources will be able in the future to compete successfully with other poles of world politics, such as the Pacific Rim and North America.

The future European federation will be founded on the principle of subsidiarity and will have to delegate not only to "nation-states," but also and above all to regional authorities, the necessary power to protect the ethnic identity of the various groups of European citizens. Within this framework a specific representation of single ethnic or regional subdivisions (including cases in which the regions have merely administrative objectives) will find a place next to the parliamentary organ elected by means of representative, direct and universal suffrage of all citizens without distinction (today's European parliament). The Committee of Regions projected by the Maastricht Treaty will lead to a real "Senate of the Regions of Europe" designated by parliaments, assemblies and councils of all the ethno-regional identities existing within EC member states.

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*The Cultural Roots of the Federalist Revolution**

Gianfranco Miglio

There is a widespread revolt against the nation-state, aimed more against the "state" than the "nation" — the state's most recent political model. The essence of the state can be traced to its pursuit of internal homogeneity. In order to reach this objective, the modern state hypostatized the idea of the nation (which remains rather fictitious) and used it as a political myth — a binding idea able to guarantee cohesion. Accordingly, it opposed the particularisms articulated in language, culture, cults and customs that constitute a people's concrete social texture and the basis for specific political institutions reflecting a local character. All this was considered "backward" and dismissed as "folklore," thus discrediting the cultivation of dialects, traditions and customs.

Although it is claimed that the nation existed before the unitary state and that the latter was the consequence of the former, states were actually built around ideas of homogeneity and unity. In fact, *the states created the nations*. Thus in Italy and Belgium the state came too late, so for better or worse the nation never came into being (Germany is an altogether different case because of its specific conditions). At a certain point the idea of homogeneity was universalized, which led to a fundamental contradiction in the political thought of the modern bourgeoisie, especially between the 18th and 19th centuries. Ignoring the friend-enemy dichotomy of the political, Friedrich Meineke identified

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two coexisting but contraposed elements: "universal brotherhood" and the idea of the nation.[1] But the essence of political synthesis is the pursuit of unity through the elimination of differences and the achievement of *political equality*. In an excellent polemical book on secession, Allan Buchanan quotes Lincoln to the effect that, ultimately, "I never really cared about the elimination of slavery, my interest was the unity of the federation."[2] This is the beginning of that obsession with unity and power which eventually led to "imperial presidencies" and of that demon possessing the modern state — a grand model of political synthesis built along Schmittian lines.

At a certain point, however, that fictitious construction of the "macronation" no longer corresponds with reality. "Politics now obtains beyond the state and the latter turns out to be only a transitory and transcended manifestation of politics."[3] What keeps nations together — ideas such as "destiny" in Hegel — are meaningful abstractions only for a very narrow circle of people. Blood and race are myths just like the nation and in fact developed along with the myth of the nation. *Authentic bonds, even ethnic ones, are cultural, obtaining at the micro rather than the macro level.* A sense of belonging, customs and everything that goes along with them, are part of the micro-level. Because they are vital and enduring, today micronationalisms break out, endangering macronationalisms. Society has satisfied the basic needs of a decisive proportion of the population, which is no longer willing to overlook its microcultural needs.

The individual's material needs must be addressed at the administrative level: public administration must be able to deal with crises affecting individuals and not entire groups; "social questions" today must be part of a well-functioning administrative apparatus (supported by voluntary service). The intrusive welfare state which generates entire groups of parasites is in decline. What emerges as a result of demands to solve specific problems is the federal concept.

The satisfaction of basic needs brings into being other particularistic aspirations. There is, e.g., a thrust toward salvaging elements of original cultures, such as one's rural roots, which assumes an extraordinary significance. The nation-state was able to resolve important problems as long

1. Friedrich Meineke, *Cosmopolitismo e Stato Nazionale* (Florence: La Nuova Italia, 1975).

2. Allan Buchanan, *Secession: The Morality of Political Divorce from Fort Sumner to Lithuania and Quebec* (Boulder, Co.: Westview Press, 1991).

3. Gianfranco Miglio, "Oltre Schmitt," in *La Politica oltre lo Stato* (Venice: Cooperative Arsenale Editoria, 1981).

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as they were few in number and involved a large number of citizens. It becomes helpless in confronting the needs of micro-entities concerning a restricted number of people. Social fragmentation exemplifies the nation-state's short-comings. *A federal constitution is meant to preserve and manage particularisms*, while the main role of their unitary counterpart is to reduce and homogenize them. Thus a federal constitution is necessarily more difficult to draft.

It is hard to administer without offending the particular. For this reason, the essence of the federal system is in the *right to secession*. Without this right there can be no federalism. The right to secede is similar to the right to exist — a concept radically opposed to the model of the French Jacobin state, even if today its rejection tends to reinforce the hegemony of Anglo-Saxon civil and constitutional law.

The Federalist Proposal For Italy

There are two conflicting constitutional ideas. One is the Southern, based on the primacy of the political leader.[4] Two institutions as far apart as the Catholic Church and the Mafia share the same recognition for the personality of command. The other is the Northern, based on the primacy of the written norm. Before it was overpowered by the French Revolution, this inheritance of Protestantism was generating a specific constitutional model of a non-integral parliamentarianism. "Cold" Europeans prefer to be governed by *norms rather than men*, which is why the classical conception of Roman law was revived. As a consequence, the *Rechtsstaat*, the law-governed state, *was born in "cold" Europe*.

Within the Roman Constitution the two ideas combined in a very delicate way: a commitment to the primacy of norms and a formidable clientelistic structure, as well as a tension between political obligation and contract. The success of the Roman institutional system may have been the result of this mixture. The Roman Constitution should be reexamined in this light. At any rate, personal power is not a dictatorship. Rather, dictatorships arise on the basis of a *Rechtsstaat*, when the role of norms spreads throughout the system and authority becomes centered in what becomes the "defender of the constitution." Where the role of the norm is reduced as a result of the personality of command, authority becomes fragmented among a multiplicity of people.

Robert D. Putman sees the Italian problem in terms of the cultural

4. See Gianfranco Miglio, *La Regolarità della Politica*, 2 volumes (Milan: Giuffrè, 1988).

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and behavioral differences between North and South. He equates the lack of civic virtue in the South with the impossibility of generating a *Rechtsstaat*.[5] Given that associationism proliferates in the South, his conclusion (that a *Rechtsstaat* is the solution) is questionable. In the South there is no trust in laws and norms. The federal state is meant to allow *the functioning of the differences between parts of the country that have differing cultures and want to be governed differently*. This would save democracy, since today a restoration of central authority in Italy is possible only by means of a dictatorship. The installation of a dictatorship in any Western country is very difficult because people are no longer willing to delegate to a higher authority the definition of their own values and order of priorities of problems to be solved.

Today the main problem concerns the restructuring of the economy by reducing the role of the central authority and by creating new administrative centers which, by reorganizing the bureaucratic apparatus of the twenty Italian regions (carbon copies of the central state performing equally bad), will create three macroregions — almost three different states. It is necessary to go beyond Silvano Labriola's "almost federal" state, which would keep all twenty regions. This does not mean that the reconstituted authority of the three macroregions must conflict with local particularisms, which instead would continue to thrive in the microregions constituting the larger entities. It must also preserve all those autonomisms that have not chosen to make claims at the political-institutional level (Occitans, Ladins, etc.). This is all the more true, given the extent that today's administrative regions do not correspond to authentic ethnic or historical borders. In fact, they were originally defined on the basis of merely statistical or fiscal reasons. When it came to institutionalizing a regional ordering, they were transformed into political-administrative entities — beyond the intentions of their original authors, who were well aware of the artificiality of their own work.

All this indicates how difficult it is to draft a new federal constitution. Of course, federalism in Italy will be rather different from the German or American versions. This is why it should be called *neo-federalism* — a federalism based on microregions closely corresponding to local realities, whose details have yet to be spelled out. It should not be forgotten that, e.g., in Lombardy the North is different from the South — even the dialects are different — and the same can be said of Western and Eastern Piedmont. Among other things, this is why the Lombard region will

5. Robert D. Putnam, *La Tradizione Civica delle Regioni Italiane* (Milan: Montadori, 1993).

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have to compile a dictionary of Lombard dialects, following the example of similar Swiss efforts. Dictionaries have great cultural value based on material civilization. At any rate, dialects such as the Lombard have a learned tradition and are still used in old families, facilitating correct usage even in the surrounding environment. They should be taught in school. Along with those needs related to communications and infrastructures, the latter are also important and should be addressed within the federal state.

Europe, Germany, and Federalism

Two years ago the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* published a study on the regions of Padania in Northern Italy (constituting the single richest macroregion of Europe) which reached more or less the following conclusions: had these regions the kind of infrastructures existing in Germany there would be a new Japan at Germany's Southern borders. Northern Italy is already competing in the Danube area with the Southern regions of *Mitteleuropa*. German entrepreneurs do not welcome this predicament, which is probably the main reason for Kohl's long-standing support for the Italian Christian Democrats. As long as the resources of the Italian North are used to support the South, Padania will not be a serious competitor. Meanwhile, Germany will prevail over French and English industries and in 5 or 6 years will have at its disposal an extremely modern and efficient manufacturing structure in the former East Germany, with the power to determine the development of both central and eastern Europe as part of its own sphere of influence. But *Germany's hegemony over Europe will not be the hegemony of a nation-state*. It is not the destiny of the German people to create a political structure. It will more likely be an economic supremacy, imposed through life-styles, exercizing considerable clout through attraction and influence, which will not take political or military form. Within this new European environment there will be ample room for broad relations between macroregions — relations easier to develop than those between nation-states. The German ambassador in Rome readily acknowledged this new state of affairs when he stated: "I am Bavarian and there is more affinity in my relations with Lombardy than with Hamburg."

In an Agnelli Foundation study of Padania, some German and Dutch scholars have outlined a map of a regionally organized Northern Europe. According to them, the megalopolis composed of the cities of the Lowlands is at the same time a state and a macroregion; the North of the Ruhr is a macroregion independent of the rest of the *Länder*;

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metropolitan centers are once again becoming what they were in the 17th and 18th centuries. The texture of tomorrow's Europe will be made up of great regions and megalopolitan areas (in Gottman's original definition of the term, with a sharper vision than that of contemporary geopoliticians).

This change, toward which Europe is headed, will be the consequence of a similar radical change of the political. Up to the advent of the modern state, the international community had been dominated by the "contract" — political relations were contractual relations (the medieval Latin vocabulary did not contain political terms, only those of private law related to private relations). Politics was conducted by private means. It was the age of the *Jurisdiktionstaat* — the state that acts by means of tribunals (the genesis of the British parliament was also, first and foremost, jurisdictional). The great constitutionalists were judges, while politics obtained within law. Subsequently, the two entities split, paving the way for the modern state which politicized everything. Only later did the political lexicon come into use and bring about the transformation of the community. At the beginning of the 19th century, Fichte theorized the birth of the nation-state as an entity closed even from an economic viewpoint. Outside the borders there are enemies, disorder. Enemies have to be fought and disorder needs to be dealt with not through contractual relations but by means of power. As Franco Cardini has shown, conflicts outside borders intensified qualitatively and quantitatively in the wars conducted by nation-states as compared to those conducted during the Middle Ages.[6] This process culminated in the post-WWII bipolar system that subsumed all political syntheses. Bipolarity brought about the maximum level of politicization through hierarchization.

The tension between the two superpowers kept the community of states in line: either on one side or the other. There was no other choice. All controversies were regulated through this opposition. This was very clear to Stalin in Yalta. A ferocius man but a true statesman, Stalin sought to convince Roosevelt, the UN advocate, about the responsibility of great powers. When internal ideological coherence failed, the communist system fell, because it was the collectivist idea that kept together, in the Schmittian sense, the political synthesis. When the Soviet Union collapsed, so did the international order based on the fear of a nuclear conflict between the US and the USSR.

6. Franco Cardini, *Quell'Antica Festa Crudele* (Milan: Il Saggiatore, 1987).

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With the end of bipolarism, the international community has returned to the situation obtaining prior to modernity. There is no room for an international authority, for the expansion of the UN's role, and the Quaker and Anglo-Saxon dream cannot be realized. Political subjects function according to the principle: *superiorem non recognoscitur*. Thus there is a return, in their multiplicity of conflicts, to an order upheld by contracts and to the convention to abide by the agreed upon rule, obeyed mainly out of convenience rather than transcendental principles. The US, the last superpower, would like to but cannot impose an order based on its own principles. It is prevented from doing so not because of a lack of means but also by virtue of life-style and ideology. The US cannot militarize by changing its own mentality in order to project all its energy outside its borders. Thus it is necessary to look to the age preceding modernity, not by assuming it will resurface as it was, but in order to envisage new possibilities. At that time there was *a plurality of political subjects* different in form, substance and objectives: the Empire, the Church, small sovereignities. Today it is necessary to assume *a dynamic approach toward relations between political subjects*, to consider them transitory and tied to a limited temporality both in international relations and in the constitutions meant to regulate community life.

In this context one can rediscover the role of the "*enclave*," where relations based on common interest replace territorial borders and ties to entities outside spatial contiguity, establishing the hierarchic order of problems to be solved on the basis of their importance. A model for this is the way economic problems are confronted by large economic interests, which keep strong ties even if they operate in different areas far from each other, limiting collaboration to specific objectives.

In a world in which the economy is primary, politics will have to borrow its organizational models from the economic world. Enormous difficulties lie on the horizon. To adopt a neo-federal model means to reconstruct everything *ex novo*. The *jus publicum Europaeum* is over and the pendulum of history is leaning toward non-political solutions based on the "contract" and the "private." This trend will become evident in the structure that states and communities will have to adopt. This is the challenge.

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*Popular Sovereignty in Germany: Anti-Absolutism and its Democratic Recycling**

Tilman Evers

Once again popular sovereignty is being discussed in Germany, now in two particular contexts: 1) the broadening of the West German Constitution — the Basic Law — into a constitution for a united Germany; and 2) the need to overcome the political parties' monopoly of politics. The two are related and appeal to popular sovereignty to attain the same goal: to criticize unresponsive government and promote political participation. Citizens had no opportunity to vote for or against unification in West or East Germany. They were not and will not be consulted concerning the new constitutional framework. Instead, the Basic Law has been gradually adapted to changing political conditions. What is generally seen as the political disinterest of the parties is ultimately a significant loss of political influence and an undermining of democracy that can only be remedied by restoring a republican responsibility shared by all. Yet most politicians tend to do as little as possible in this context, which results in a general malaise occasionally expressed in a destructive defiance. Along with other experiences of deterioration, this has resulted in a growing disillusionment with democracy, especially in East Germany.

How did the principle of popular sovereignty — the basis of the West German Constitution and the ideal which challenged the former East German regime — become derailed? Can the basic principle of

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popular sovereignty still constitute and define democratic government? Can the concept actually fulfill its intended critical function, or does it turn out to be a fleeting shadow when it is needed the most? As is often the case in political theory, in this instance also the content and structure of concepts developed historically. Popular sovereignty emerged as a slogan of the rising bourgeoisie and thus participated in its historical ambivalence in simultaneously opposing absolutist power and in establishing its own power — all in the name of freedom.

Rousseau and the French Revolution

It is common knowledge that the concept of popular sovereignty stems from Jean-Jacques Rousseau's *Social Contract* (1762). Accordingly, authority is justified only if its origin and objective are individual autonomy. Since individual freedom can only be realized within a community, basic principles of social life as well as common decisions are necessary. They are established by the consent of free individuals in common laws. If each individual governs his own actions there is no longer any contradiction between freedom and power.

This paradoxical concept, rife with tension, belongs to a tradition of natural law deriving primarily from Aristotle and predating early modernism. The revolutionary consequences of this postulate of freedom, however, had been avoided for centuries by means of a fictional contract banishing the freedom of individuals to an imaginary "original" state of affairs in which they willingly subordinate themselves to the rule of a self-appointed sovereign. Rousseau marked the end of this fiction. Individual autonomy cannot be relegated to a mythical past; instead, it must be realized within the actual process of exercising power. This means that those who are subjected to the laws must also be those who make them.

In this literal sense modelled on the Greek polis as well as the Swiss cantons — there is no popular sovereignty in any modern state. The French National Assembly, which closely followed its philosophical mentor Rousseau, readily substituted representative for direct democracy in the very elections to the Assembly. As such, the door was opened to a new power elite which did develop during the French Revolution, as Rousseau had clearly foreseen. Thus Rousseau was not only the first, but also the last philosophical advocate of unlimited popular sovereignty. Various studies of democracy have shown that during the past two centuries democratic governments have been nothing more than oligarchies. Yet all of them have advocated the principle of popular

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sovereignty. Even the worst dictatorships have subscribed to it. Why has this fundamental principle of political freedom proven so helpless against authoritarian arrogance? And why does it continue to have appeal and validity?

The Spirit of Anti-Absolutism

Many of the problems with popular sovereignty are immediately apparent when one considers the historical background of "sovereignty" itself. It traces back to absolutism and is thus the direct opposite of democracy. Recast as "popular sovereignty" into a weapon against absolutism, this new concept cannot escape its original limitations. Unlike other basic political concepts, "sovereignty" can be traced to one author: the French jurist Jean Bodin. In *Les six livres de la République* (1576) he sought a way out of the religious civil wars of his time, which had destroyed the medieval certainty of a divine order and threatened political collapse. Four years before the book's publication, on the night of the St. Bartholomew's Massacre, Bodin had been taken for a Calvinist and almost lost his life. This experience was no doubt one of the compelling reasons for his theorizing about a central government with unlimited political power. Only an absolute ruler standing above all could guarantee the unity of the state. Bodin's principle of central state power has remained fundamental in modern politics. It is the basis of the monopoly of the legitimate use of force.

In the debates of his time, Bodin sided with the rising territorial princes in their struggle against the Estates' demand to share power during the late Middle Ages. In so doing, he paved the way for absolutism. Two centuries later, Rousseau adopted Bodin's concept of a unified state power responsible only to itself and turned it into a slogan against the princes' arbitrary rule. At that time the political thrust of the concept lay in its polemical link with the social extremes of the time — royalty and the people. This link is also the source of the historical residues that make it useful for authoritarian distortions.

Bodin's initial question was not concerned with the legitimacy but rather the efficiency of government. Thus sovereignty does not deal with limitations or control of power. On the contrary, sovereignty applies only to one who is not bound (*legibus solutus*) to prior or present laws and conventions. Since Rousseau, this premise that political power should be free of normative obligations has been used as a basic principle of democratic legitimation! It is as if one sought to use the conquered Bastille as a parliament building. The extent to which the old spirit

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lives on in such a conceptual construct is evident in Carl Schmitt's maxim: "Sovereign is he who decides on the state of exception."

Who are the People?

Even more ambiguous in the concept of popular sovereignty is the determination of who constitutes the people. A meaningful definition of this vague construct has proven elusive and this vagueness has encouraged the most disparate and fatalistic interpretations. This began with Rousseau's endowing the people with all the attributes of the deposed monarch. This presumed unity of the people was substituted for the corporeal unity of the prince as the imaginary body politic. In order to bind individual freedom with the will of this collective subject, Rousseau had to assume an *a priori* commonweal which was only to be disclosed in the process of the legislation of the *volunté générale*. This was the only way to maintain his postulated identity of command and obedience in which no one should be obliged to do anything against his will unless, possibly, to protect his own freedom.

Historically, this hypostatization of unity has often led to the substitution of a "true" people for and against an excluded "non-people." This began with the French Revolution when the "people" were superseded by the mythical unity of the "nation." At first the nobility and the clergy were excluded, as were all the powers of the old regime, then eventually all those Robespierre regarded as traitors. Already in 1789, in the Declaration of Human Rights, the sovereignty of the people had become the sovereignty of the nation. Thereafter, for better or worse, the concept of national sovereignty became fundamental to 19th and 20th century national movements. There is a direct line from this concept to Woodrow Wilson's "right of self-determination" and to the bloody history of nationalism.

Social classes have always sought to portray themselves as the "people." During the French Revolution, Abbé Sieyès identified the Third Estate, i.e., the rising bourgeoisie, as the "true" people. In Marxism the proletariat assumed the role of the chosen people — the embodiment of the historical myth of the common good. In its most extreme perversion, even the Stalinist dictatorship presented itself as the popular agent of this common good and thus claimed to be the highest expression of popular sovereignty. Similarly, National Socialism displaced this popular commonweal with a racist unity. Furthermore, the idea of a collective body implies that someone should be its head, This allowed Lenin to advocate the "democratic centralism" of a vanguard party and

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Schmitt to theorize about "charismatic dictatorship" as representing the will of the people.

Between the Denial of Authority and the Affirmation of Freedom

Neither "people" nor "sovereignty" — these two components of the new principle of political legitimacy — is originally and unmistakably related to either freedom or democracy. Democratic theory and practice begin with the problem of how to institutionally guarantee individual freedom within a political context that at the same time safegards the social cohesion. Popular sovereignty skirts this problem by questioning authority itself. Carried to its ultimate conclusion the original notion that every individual governs himself excludes even "the power of the people," i.e., democracy. The fact that social life is not possible without some authority remains unanswered in the concept of popular sovereignty. Rousseau actually refused to answer his own question concerning the compatibility of freedom and authority; the utopian reconciliation he offered was a way of declaring it unsolvable. The vehement rejection of external determinations was not balanced out by any clear notion of the conditions and limitations of self-determination.

This paved the way for all kinds of conflicting interpretations, which explains why popular sovereignty has capitulated so readily and so often to authoritarian manipulations. It could legitimate any sovereign authority associated with the bourgeois revolution. It was sufficient to legitimate any republican form of government, no matter how distorted by economics, technology or nationalism. Historically it was precisely this excessive opposition to authority which rendered it vulnerable to open autocracy and made it impossible to distinguish between rational and irrational, legitimate and illegitimate authority. Its strength in principle — in being as absolute as its enemy in its anti-absolutism — is also its weakness in practice.

Popular sovereignty as a principle of *public* freedom can only be defined in terms of its counterpart — universal human rights as a principle of *private* freedom. From the very beginning, the principle of universal human rights has had a positive and recognizable content. It became an inspiration for the American and the French Revolutions. Unlike popular sovereignty, it did not originate from its antithesis but from a 2000-year old tradition of natural rights. Thus this principle is less neglected, less distorted and less misused.

The revolutionary idea of individual sovereignty, however, could only be defined negatively — as the negation of autocratic power. Its

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ability to acquire a positive content was historically limited, because of the Estates' participation in power during the late Middle Ages (which did not favor the new concept of *individual* freedom) and due to the fact that Protestantism (the freedom of all Christians) was reduced to the private sphere by the religious civil wars, the Thirty Years War and absolutism. With the possible exception of Calvinism, it even came under government control. All that remained was the emphasis on the natural rights of an original equality of free individuals who, thanks to their reversal of the fictional contract of absolutism, could only stand republicanism on its feet by yet another inversion.

Precisely this type of conceptual irredentism became successful in the 18th century. Kant considered "popular sovereignty" an oxymoron. Yet it was this semantic provocation which made it attractive. During the Enlightenment all those struggling against the *ancien régime* found popular sovereignty a valuable catchword and a binding tie. It was under this banner that the monarchical principle was overthrown.

The impulse toward freedom, which became the signature of political modernity, was defined primarily in reference to popular sovereignty. Its impact was not a function of new institutions but rather of a change of epochs. Since then the burden of proof has been reversed. It is not freedom but domination which must be justified. Popular sovereignty measures authority according to freedom. Without an absolute indifference to historical and social realities, such a reversal would not have been possible. Thus its weakness in practice is also its strength in principle. This also explains why the concept remains indispensable, despite its historical weaknesses. Loyal to its anti-absolutist origin, it preserves its negative power — a power which does not spell out the politics of liberation but nevertheless opposes what is against it. With its banner of freedom, popular sovereignty leaves open a utopian horizon which does not remove the burden of its institutional realization but provides the necessary criteria for it.

The interminable process of redefining the concept began with Kant. Instead of following Rousseau in grounding the commonweal in a strictly republican context, Kant, cautioned by Jacobin practice, sought a liberal solution. He replaced the demand for virtue with intelligent institutions, thus making possible a republican form of government "even for a people of devils." Kant also argued that the demand for free and equal participation in power could not be taken literally but only mediated procedurally. Particularly in Germany, the subsequent development of the concept was based on his constitutional interpretation.

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The price paid for this Kantian understanding was that part of the pathos for freedom inherent in Rousseau's original concept was lost. Already with Kant, the law wins behind the scenes. More precisely, the constitutional order appears as the "true" guarantor of freedom and repository of sovereignty. The people obey themselves in that they obey rational laws, no matter who has enacted them. The "*pouvoir constituant*," which with Rousseau is the basic form of popular sovereignty, with Kant disappears beyond constitutional sovereignty. Hegel went a step further. By making the legally organized state the embodiment of the moral idea, he restored to the *constitutional* monarchy that very supremacy which Rousseau detached from the absolute monarch. Thus the state became the embodiment of concrete freedom. The people are free *because* the state is free. This concept of state sovereignty hindered the rise of a self-confident liberalism in Germany well into the 20th century. At any rate, Hegel's concept of a constitutionally enlightened monarchy was not illiberal. At that time encyclopedias defined "citizens" as apolitical private subjects — by definition not sovereign. Only with the Weimar Republic did the principle of popular sovereignty find its way from France to Germany.

The Anglo-American Recycling

Parallel to the continental development of popular sovereignty, there was another almost independent recycling of its abstract principles in the English-speaking world, almost independently of it. First deployed in the English parliament in the 17th century, popular sovereignty was articulated most clearly in the self-government of the North American colonies. It can be traced to the same continental roots in rational law, along with the concept of humanity in the social philosophy of Calvinism (which had already found political expression in the Republic of the Netherlands). Were one to search for a precursor, it would be Johannes Althusius, the Calvinist from Herborn, whose *Politica Methodic e Digesta* (1603) is explicitly opposed to Bodin's interpretation, posing the "*universitas populi*" as the source of all legal authority against the monarchic principle. Althusius' original joining of medieval estate privileges and modern rationalism with the Calvinist dogma of no mediation between man and God found little recognition in Germany or France. The same cannot be said of the Netherlands and (via England) of North America. The wording in the *Bill of Rights of Virginia* (1776), written around the same time as the Declaration of Independence, reads like a translation of Althusius' Latin prose: ". . . all power is vested in and consequently derived from the people."

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Emerging from a long experience of self-government in North America, democracy came to be understood as a compromise of conflicting interests. By the time of the French Revolution, constitutional experience in America had demonstrated that elections and the majority principle were the best means, and that all political offices should be controlled by a system of "checks and balances" and bound by unshakable basic freedoms. The theory of democracy today moves within this polarity. On the one hand, there are highly abstract French principles, which still retain their critical power; on the other, there is the democratic reality deriving from Anglo-American experiences, which does not do justice to these principles but still represent the only attempt to realize them. In the practice of democracy it has not been possible so far to instill the historical memory of the concept of popular sovereignty, nor has "democratic recycling" as yet led to an anchoring in the old concept of the actual experiences of democratic participation as an unquestioned new understanding of popular sovereignty. Political discussion should focus on such an institutional fulfillment of the old concept. At any rate, the fact that this political framework remains incomplete does not mean that every type of pseudo-democratic authority can be grounded in it.

The Federal Republic between Kant and Hegel

The West German Constitution states that "all political power derives from the people." Semantically at least, this is closer to the French than to the American model — it refers to a singular "people" rather than to the plural "We the people," to sovereign political power rather than to communitarian power. Whereas in American thinking power is vested in the citizenry and in political officials while in office, in Germany's constitutional language it derives "from the people" — obviously away from them and thus to the state, in good right-Hegelian fashion. Here Rousseau's sovereign people are marginalized and reduced to spectators. Only elected representatives need be "responsible." In the Basic Law the constituent power of the people is mentioned twice: in the preamble and in the concluding article (146) in connection with the provision for reunification. That day has come, and the governing coalition made the possible impossible in order to circumvent this promise. The discussion of a future constitution for a united Germany has taken place behind the closed doors of a parliamentary committee presuming to represent the people.

The original Basic Law of the Federal Republic of Germany is imbued

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with the liberal spirit of Kant's concept of popular sovereignty. This is especially evident in the sections on rights, on public office and the administration of the law, and especially on the unimpeachable position of the Supreme Court as the guardian of the constitutional order. For the first time in Germany a self-confident liberal public sphere developed out of this — one committed to the constitution and faithful to its institutions. This is still true of its leftist representatives. Beginning with Adenauer, however, a more Right-Hegelian (state-centered) understanding of democracy became dominant in the political practice of the Federal Republic. Accordingly, the sovereignty of the people became the foundational myth of a form of government which makes the people the object of an "enlightened" elite acting on their behalf. Periodic elections approximate the fictions of subjugation in the early modern age: in the zero hour when the people transfer their right to rule to a freely elected authority and therewith definitively renounce it. Democratic progress consists of acts of renouncing this right every four years.

Guided by doctrines of public law in which a liberal-conservative wing actually represented the progressive wing in opposing openly authoritarian tendencies, this state-centered concept of sovereignty gradually became the predominant interpretation of the Basic Law. Relevant stages of this process were the re-armament of West Germany in the 1950s, the outlawing of the Communist Party in 1955, the Emergency Laws in the 1960s granting vast powers to the executive, decrees legalizing the political screening of applicants for public office for suspected "radicalism" in the 1970s, laws enabling security forces to ignore civil rights in the prosecution of suspected terrorists following the Baader-Meinhoff hysteria in 1977, and the "regulation" of the right of political asylum amounting to its practical abolition in 1993.

The executive style of German reunification reinforced this state of affairs. Moreover, by invoking an alleged "state of exception," recently the German government has played with ideas of exempting itself from the rules of democratic legitimation. It seems as if, buttressed by a Prussian concept of the nation-state, Right-Hegelian thinking is displacing Kant's constitutional liberalism.

The Return of Rousseau?

With the chant "we are the people" citizens of the former East Germany rediscovered the anti-absolutist power of the demand for popular sovereignty. The call for self-legislation had not been expressed so clearly on German streets since 1848. Despite the disillusionment that followed,

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this experience has not been forgotten. Never before have citizens viewed the ruling party and the state so critically. Lacking alternatives, the resulting discontent has expressed itself in abstention, cynicism and protest. Yet it is clear that "political indifference" disappears when channels of shared political responsibility open up.

For years active groups, initiatives and movements have demanded more participation. There is no lack of suggestions, such as constitutional provisions for direct democracy, advisory boards, citizens' councils, planning groups, access to public records, grievance associations, etc. In all the new federal states (created from the former East Germany), as well as in Schleswig-Holstein and Lower Saxony, referenda and plebiscites have been introduced. In the joint constitutional commission of the lower and upper houses, the proposition for such popular legislation achieved a simple majority but failed to obtain the necessary two-thirds majority.

Will Rousseau be revived? It is surprising how often "civic sense," solidarity and "fraternity" are mentioned in Germany nowdays. The German president has called for an engaged civil society. American "communitarianism" is discussed in periodicals and books. Liberalism is rediscovering the meaning of the non-utilitarian impulses it once abstracted from the republican discourse on virtue and which it now misses when confronted with authoritarian challenges. In order to protect the citizen and the state, liberalism sharply divided the private and public spheres. In so doing it unwittingly contributed to the isolation of state-centered politics. But where representation no longer mediates codetermination, it also no longer transfers legitimation. The experience of the Federal Republic of Germany shows that liberal constitutionalism withers if it is not nourished by participation. Kant knew he was standing on Rousseau's shoulders. His categorical imperative did not abolish the *volonté générale*, it merely transferred it from the collective to the responsibility of the individual.

In a sense, this is how the old Federal Republic has been functioning through all the years of its existence. Almost all the impulses for social reform during the last decades originated outside parliamentary circles. Above all, the various new social movements have functioned as indicators of social conflicts and as laboratories of possible solutions, without being given any credit for it. To be sure, this Sisyphian task of practical participation requires corresponding institutions which encourage and strengthen it. Today in Germany democratic power is only justified when it calls for participation.

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Today politics without representation and procedure is neither conceivable nor desirable. Direct democracy cannot manage without them. In fact it requires more complex procedures in order to gain a "shorter" representation of specific issues. The call for codetermination has not yet been made outside the constitutional framework. Rather, it seeks to make room for its own institutions. This means that democracy requires two things: the channels of participation must allow *and* facilitate the creation of self-organized institutions. Where popular sovereignty manifests itself in procedures, the possibility of creating and changing procedures becomes the most important manifestation of popular sovereignty.

Today "constituent power" manifests itself precisely in such steps of experimental expansion and variation of participating institutions. But potentially this requires access to authority to decide jurisdictions. As long as popular sovereignty cannot constitute itself as a totality and act as such, the activism of concerned parts of the population can only be seen as a poor substitute. The variety of citizen engagement only becomes believable as the practical expression of popular sovereignty in everyday life when it is possible to form a majority with respect to mutually agreed upon general decisions. Without such a minimum of concrete institutional jurisdiction, popular sovereignty remains an empty formula.

Until the 1970s, elections and political parties mediated this minimum. Afterwards they ceased to successfully represent an increasingly complex, critical and problem-ridden society. But the less inclusive they became, the more they demanded that right. Today legitimation of political power by means of elections and political parties results in a new credibility only if the citizenry is able to exercise popular sovereignty by subjecting a controversial decision to a self-initiated plebiscite. By the same token, it tacitly consents when it abstains from doing so.

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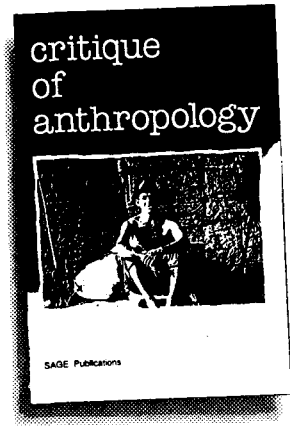

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*Journalists, Cynics and Cheerleaders**

Russell Jacoby

An acquaintance, writing a newspaper article about a forthcoming university conference on postmodernism, interviewed a number of academics. What did they think about Derrida? Post-structuralism? Fredric Jameson? Recent French theorists? The flap about Paul de Man? They had thoughts, but did not want to be quoted by name. Why? They were, well, nervous. Perhaps a colleague might discover what they actually thought. Maybe professional opinion had shifted. Possibly it would not look good to be airing opinions in the press. Play it safe; stay anonymous.[1] In 1990 tenured professors of the left with no fear of persecution or unemployment backed away from public statements on subjects most people have never heard of. This is the group conservatives think is destroying Western civilization.

Apart from the conservatives, few are aware of academic subversion. This needs immediate qualification. While acrimonious debates over structuralism or deconstructionism or postmodernism barely touch the public, other university findings shape far-ranging discussions. New academic research drives arguments about multiculturalism, and spurs the rewriting and reteaching of American history. The controversy over the 500th anniversary of Columbus's arrival in America would be inconceivable without a scholarly infrastructure. New university scholarship informs, and sometimes engenders, public discussions about museum exhibitions, welfare, poverty, the legacy of slavery, women in the workforce, learning processes, and other urgent subjects.

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* This is Chapter 6 of *Dogmatic Wisdom: How the Culture Wars Divert Education and Distract America* (New York: Doubleday, forthcoming).

1. Annette Leddy, "Academic Fashion in the Eighties," unpublished.

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This should not be minimized; nor is it surprising. At least since the turn of the century, professors, especially social scientists, have addressed matters of community well-being, often joining government commissions that urge new laws and policies. Today the size alone of American higher education ensures that it produces lucid and original thinkers. By including more women, African-Americans, Latinos, and other groups, higher education is less than ever an isolated tower pursuing traditional subjects in a familiar manner; now colleges and universities reflect and partake of public life and its discontents.

What is surprising, however, is not the vigor of the general scholarly contribution, but its weakness, especially on its own turf, education. A case in point is the controversy about campus politics and curriculum. For all the ballyhooing about "culture wars," the war has been one-sided. Conservatives roll out big and sometimes incisive books, from *The Closing of the American Mind* to *Illiberal Education*, and a thousand academics respond with hoots, boos, and occasional essays, but nothing substantial. Where is the sweeping response to the conservative critics by our major leftist academics? Do they have better things to do? Are they unconcerned?

The situation may be changing, the replies now appearing. Yet this does not explain the long delay; nor a crippling ambiguity in the retorts. Some reasons for the silence I may have anticipated in *The Last Intellectuals*. Unlike past American intellectuals, the recent generation never left the campus; they went from being undergraduates and graduates to faculty members. This is not a moral judgment, but a statement of the facts of cultural activity and their consequences. A life passed exclusively on campuses affects how individuals think and write. The newer intellectuals never needed to write for a larger public; colleagues, departments, and professional conferences constituted their world — and bread and butter. After a while, either the ability or the desire to reach a nonprofessional public atrophies. When conservative books for this public appeared, the professors hardly answered, and perhaps cannot.

Yet facts can be resisted or celebrated. To a startling degree, American left professors embrace their professional roles. They are not radicals who are professors, but professors who are radicals. They encounter the world as secure employees of mainstream institutions. This recasts the topology of the "culture wars," for the leftists are not outsiders blasting society, but insiders enjoying society. Despite the academic fetish of "the other," "the boundary," "the margin," these categories hardly apply to

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university leftists, who frequently crow of their campus prowess and successes, denigrating the unaccredited and unaccomplished.

"It is all but impossible, I am told," writes Paul Lauter, a left literary professor, "to convince a congressperson of the importance of studying Zora [Neale Hurston, the black writer] together with, God forbid in place of, Ernest [Hemingway]." The mock surprise expresses the insider's real smugness. No need to worry about the evil senators. "That is no defeat; it says to me, that while the advocates of a broad, multicultural canon have consolidated our position within most educational institutions, the Bennetts and Blooms have been hard at work in the public arenas."[2] A recent summing-up of the academic culture wars confirms that the conservative rumblings stayed "outside the university"; inside things proceeded apace with "little negative effect . . . Race studies, queer theory, colonial and postcolonial studies, and others didn't miss a beat."[3]

At the very least, this is odd. Once upon a time, radicals subsisted as marginal writers, agitators, and labor organizers indicting society. Now left professors attack hegemony and conservatism from within hegemonic and conservative institutions. The standard conservative plaint that sixties radicals have taken over the university is twice wrong. Even on the most generous accounting, leftists assume a presence, hardly a majority, in few departments; and they behave like good employees: they give their courses, attend committee meetings, and hobnob at conferences. As David Bromwich, a Yale professor, observes, "True, some of the sixties people are still around; and true, sometimes now they have tenure. These facts say nothing about how they conduct themselves . . . One may say as a rule that their bureaucratic manners are impeccable."[4]

Sociological observations about today's radicals have their limits, however. Whether they are chaired professors at major universities or unemployed textile workers may be irrelevant; thought must be judged on its own merits. Conservatives love to mention the big salaries of (some) academic critics, as if money invalidates ideas; this may be the conservatives' own brand of Marxism. Just as Marxists once denounced

2. Paul Lauter, "Canon Theory and Emergent Practice," in L. J. Davis and M. B. Mirabella, ed., *Left Politics and the Literary Profession* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990), p. 144. William Bennett was Secretary of Education under President Reagan.

3. Christopher Newfield, "What Was Political Correctness ?" *Critical Inquiry*, 19 (1993), pp. 315 and 335.

4 David Bromwich, *Politics by Other Means: Higher Education and Group Thinking* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), p. 119.

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philosophers as tools of power because of their state employment, conservatives denounce radicals because of their university wages. For each, pay stubs replace thinking.

Sociological remarks are not irrelevant inasmuch as they serve to illuminate, not dismiss. Who picks up the tab might be gossip, but also may be suggestive. The Internal Revenue Service interpretation of ideas, however, cannot stop with leftists. Those who heatedly denounce "tenured radicals" may be "tenured conservatives" elegantly dining at corporate expense. For instance, the Olin Foundation, perhaps the most savvy of the conservative foundations, dispenses many millions directly to conservative scholars who uphold private enterprise and the "American heritage."

These sums are not paltry. Samuel P. Huntington, long identified with cold war ideology, received close to $1.4 million to set up a center at Harvard; Allan Bloom walked away with almost $2 million to direct "seminars, publications, and fellowships" at the University of Chicago; Irving Kristol had to make ends meet with only $400,000. Olin money handsomely supported the three major critiques of American higher education: Bloom's *The Closing of the American Mind*, Kimball's *Tenured Radicals*, and D'Souza's *Illiberal Education.* Olin even earmarked funds just to promote D'Souza's book.[5] And this only begins the list of conservatives bankrolled by Olin and other foundations. Are coddled conservatives superior to "tenured radicals"?

The radical professors who indignantly report this are themselves beneficiaries of other foundations or well-endowed universities. Less monies are available to left-of-center than to conservative scholars, yet this assertion depends on how foundations are politically classified. "It is important not to lose perspective on the impact and extent of conservative funding," writes Paul Gottfried, a scholar of conservativism. "The big conservative foundations are dwarfs both in comparison to giants like Ford and Rockefeller and when measured against the vast sums available to conventional liberals and leftists."[6]

Marxist or post-Marxist professors, however, turn irritable when historical materialism comes home to roost. Conservatives are called servants

5. See John M. Olin Foundation, *1990 Annual Report* (New York); Jon Wiener, "Dollars for Neocon Scholars," in his *Professors, Politics and Pop* (New York: Verso, 1991), pp. 99-103; and Sara Diamond, "Endowing the Right-Wing Academic Agenda," *Covert Action* 38 (Fall 1991), pp. 46-49.

6. Paul Gottfried, *The Conservative Movement*, rev. ed. (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1993), p. 141. See his savvy discussion of shifts in conservative monies, "Funding an Empire," pp. 118-141.

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of power, but leftist academics live on air. Inasmuch as they justify academia, however, the professors are not only radicals but ideologues, apologists for themselves and their institutions. In the "culture wars" little is more striking than the ease with which the new professors defend professional reputations and language, sophisticated theories and distinguished friends, heaping contempt on journalists and critics as backward outsiders. A left supposedly lives and thinks in the name of a larger public; among the new academics the democratic spirit flags.

In a response to conservative critics Michael Berubé, an English professor, protests that newspaper book reviewers do not stay abreast of academic writings; journalists ignore "new historicism" and "reception theory" and no longer read the new scholars. "The result so far is that recent literary theory is so rarely accorded the privilege of representing itself in nonacademic forums that journalists, disgruntled professors, embittered ex-graduate students and their families and friends now feel entitled to say anything at all about the academy without fear of contradiction by general readers. The field is wide open, and there's no penalty for charlatanism." Berubé's wording reveals the mental furnishings of the new academic; the world is divided between insiders, the true scholars, and outsiders, who are journalists, bitter professors, and charlatans.

Berubé is floored that a journalist failed to pay obeisance to the new academic honchos. Writing about "political correctness," this journalist did not cite Michel Foucault or Henry Louis Gates, Jr., or "*any* currently influential academic critic and theorist." Rather, he quoted a New York Board of Education task force, a Tulane draft report on race and gender, and a University of Pennsylvania administrator. Beat that! Not a single influential critic! No Foucault! Where has this rube been? "Whatever else they may be," Berubé huffs, "these are not the tests we academic critics normally rely upon in writing scholarly articles, book reviews, tenure evaluations, or course descriptions."[7]

This is the language of an academic establishment defending its trade from upstarts. "We" professors refer to "influential" thinkers like ourselves; we don't ask administrators or — gads! — New York Board of Education dumbbells. Nor are Berubé's sentiments unusual. A recent collection, *Messages from American Universities*, cites Berubé's wisdom, and the editor adds his own. The "academy bashers," whom the editor also calls "opportunists," have "failed to learn the new critical

7. Michael Berubé, "Public Image Limited," in *Debating P.C.*, ed. Paul Berman New York: Laurel/Dell, 1992), pp. 127-128, 135.

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languages." "All the commotion," this editor states, "is coming from a few splinter groups of academic malcontents." Joan Wallach Scott, a professor at the Institute for Advanced Study at Princeton, calls the critics of university practices "disaffected scholars" and "marginal intellectuals."[8] Once this language — "splinter groups," "marginal intellectuals," "malcontents" — was used by an establishment against a left; now it used by a left establishment against its critics.

Barbara Herrnstein Smith, in her introduction to *The Politics of Liberal Education*, a collection responding to conservative critics, complains of "media exploitation" and "misrepresentation." The reports of academic malpractice have "obviously" been "produced by and for persons remote from the scenes of the alleged crimes." She offers a lighter version of dumb journalists who cannot fathom influential academic thinkers. The problem is that journalists and professors use different "messages." The "messages" that professors typically send to each other "in specialized journals and at professional conferences" are "long on new, challenging ideas, short on familiar, confirming ones." Smith, who obviously peruses few academic periodicals, writes that journalists, on the other hand, send vivid, dramatic, and familiar messages. Unfortunately journalists do not understand their own simplicity; they make the "conceptual, abstract, challenging, unfamiliar" messages of academics sound like their rudimentary communiqués.[9]

In 1987, a researcher discovered scores of articles in an anti-Semitic and pro-Nazi newspaper penned by Paul de Man, a leading American literary critic, who had died several years earlier. De Man, who immigrated to the United States after World War II, wrote a series of highly compromising pieces in the early 1940s in his native Belgium — one recommended "the creation of a Jewish colony isolated from Europe." As a prominent Yale professor of literature, he had methodically masked his past life, alluding to a fictitious career in the Resistance. News of his past and his lifelong effort to bury it put academics in a dither.

Yet for many who rushed to defend their fallen idol it was simply "news," the stuff of journalists and commentators too pigheaded to understand the subtleties of high academic theory. David Lehman, who

8. Mark Edmundson, "The Academy Writes Back," in *Wild Orchids and Trotsky: Messages from American Universities*, ed. M. Edmundson (New York: Penguin, 1993), pp. 3, 6, 15. Also see Joan Wallach Scott, "The Campaign Against Political Correctness," *Change* (November-December 199), p. 33.

9. Barbara Herrnstein Smith "Introduction" to *The Politics of Liberal Education*, ed. D. J. Gless and B. H. Smith (Durham: Duke University Press, 1992)1, pp. 3-4.

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covered the story for *Newsweek* and later wrote a book on the affair, was taken aback by the journalist bashing. "Nothing quite prepared one for the virtual declaration of war on journalism that soon issued from deconstructionist quarters." Many professors refused to talk with Lehman. Some denounced the "collaboration between the university and the mass media"; others attacked the "dismaying ignorance" of the "academic journalists," who were "shrill, strident, violent, (male) hysterical." As Lehman noted, these critics "retreated to a position of mystification. They, and they alone, were qualified to discuss the matter; all others, keep out."[10]

The disdain for a public prose should stick in the craw of left professors. It doesn't. It goes down smoothly, facilitated by a widely accepted proposition: clear language undermines critical thought. While the position can easily be ridiculed, it rests on some undeniable truths. Language is more than an empty vessel; not every argument can be made accessible to a general audience. Certain insights, information, and subjects require a specialized vocabulary. This is the justification for a technical idiom. No one picks up a pilot's training book or a report by a structural engineer and complains that they are not written in lucid and accessible English. They are not intended to be, and perhaps could not be; the subject matter necessitates a complex vocabulary.

In the exact sciences the proposition seems incontestable; papers by biomathematicians use a special vocabulary that limits a general readership. Yet transferring the point to the humanities and social sciences is dicey. Literature, history, and philosophy belong to the common stock of humanity; their importance resides partly in their openness to an educated reader. Thoughtful citizens can acquaint themselves with Western philosophy and literature from Plato to William James or from Sophocles to Kafka. Of course, this same citizen might well stumble on Kant or Wittgenstein. Nevertheless, the humanities as a whole resist becoming a technical discipline with a technical audience, an impulse that hardly marks Western science. An educated individual who could read Plato or Kafka would be stymied by Archimedes or Einstein. These require interpretations, introductions, and translations for even the well-educated.

Many, if not most, scholars in the humanities and social sciences challenge this reasoning or, at least, its implications. It seems to suggest

10. All quotes cited in David Lehman, *Signs of the Times: Deconstruction and the Fall of Paul de Man* (New York: Poseidon, 1992), pp. 212-18.

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that their work is interior to scientific research because it is less complex and more accessible. They draw direct parallels between their studies and those in the physical and biological sciences; their research is just as specialized and complex, and needs as much training to grasp. For this reason, for well over a century scholars have sought to yoke their endeavors more closely to science; they want to bask in its glow. The study of politics became "political science"; the study of society became "the science of society" or sociology. New disciplines pop up like "library science" and "information science." These tags mean: Stop. Do Not Enter. We are scientists. You need credits, degrees, and training to judge our work. It also means: we use a special vocabulary.

Left academics resuscitate an additional argument to justify their vocabulary. Not only do specialized fields employ a specialized idiom, but society, especially Anglo-American society, resists subversive truths by demanding a simple language. A "clear" sentence structure represses critical thinking that requires a counter-logic and vocabulary.

Again, this belief can be easily ridiculed; and again, it rests on some valid ideas from an honorable, and mainly Hegelian, pedigree. German idealism protested the domination of simple clarity as simplemindedness. Hegel ridiculed 2 x 2 = 4 logic and "healthy common sense." "To questions like 'When was Caesar born?' 'How many feet make a furlong?,' etc., a straight answer ought to be given . . . But the nature of a so-called truth of that sort is different from the nature of philosophical truth."[11] Philosophical truths require surmounting common truisms and familiar categories; they necessitate an uncommon language or what Hegel once half-apologetically called an "obscure style."[12] These ideas passed into German and French philosophic thought, including Marxist varieties.

American poststructuralist, post-Marxist, and post-everything thinkers appeal to these ideas in justifying their language. We are highly trained specialists, using a complex prose, they say; and we are dedicated subversives, using an idiom that resists a repressive clarity. For instance, Judith Frank, a feminist professor, complains that a journalist critic "seems to expect the humanities to be utterly transparent to the general population, when the truth is that for those of us who have gone through graduate training, the humanities are a profession, and

11. G. W. F. Hegel, *The Phenomenology of Mind*, tr. by J. T. Baillie (New York: Humanities Press, 1964), pp. 99-100.

12. Hegel to von Knebel, November 21, 1807, in *Hegel: The Letters*, ed. C. Butler (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984), p. 145.

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that the people who practice a particular profession are trained in its language."[13] This might be called pulling rank, showing the unaccredited to the door.

Fredric Jameson, a dean of Marxist cultural criticism, offers a similar justification; literary and cultural theory is as complex as molecular biology. It is "surprising" how many people take a "belletristic view," Jameson commented, making "the assumption, which they would never make in the area of nuclear physics, linguistics, symbolic logic, or urbanism, that such [cultural] problems can still be laid out with all the leisurely elegance of a coffee-table magazine." Cultural theory is no "less complex" than biochemistry, and resists coffee-table elegance. An admirer, who quotes these sentences, continues: "The intricacies of Jameson's sentences are a sign not only of the difficulties of the problems he analyzes but also of the seriousness of his approach. His technical prose bears witness that cultural theory . . . is as valid as those "other disciplines."[14]

The reasoning is slick: complex sentences spell profundity, and profundity spells professionalization, which demonstrates cultural theory's parity with biophysics. The only piece missing is the political justification, which Jameson set forth in *Marxism and Form*; he defended the writing of the German critical Marxists from the charges of obscurity. "It can be admitted that it does not conform to the canons of clear and fluid journalistic writing taught in schools. But what if those ideas of clarity and simplicity have come to serve a very different ideological purpose . . . ?" What if transparency facilitates clichés, but avoids "real thought" requiring effort and time? For Jameson the density of T. W. Adorno's writing exemplified a break with repressive clarity. His "bristling mass of abstractions and cross-references is precisely intended to be read in situation, against the cheap facility of what surrounds it, as a warning to the reader of the price he has to pay for genuine thinking."[15]

The point is well taken; it is also misleading, and not only because the characterization of Adorno's writings as a "bristling mass of abstractions and cross-references" misses the mark; this describes academic writing, not Adorno's. The issue is not the difficulty of writing, but the fetish of difficulty, the belief that fractured English, name dropping, and abstractions guarantee profundity, professionalization, and subversion. With this belief comes the counter-belief: lucidity

13. Judith Frank, "In the Waiting Room," in *Wild Orchids and Trotsky*, p. 130.
14. David Kaufmann, "The Profession of Theory," *PMLA* 105 (1990) p. 525.
15. Fredric Jameson, *Marxism and Form* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1971), p. xiii.

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implies banality, amateurism, and conservatism.

These tenets are the new coin of the realm. New academics invariably note that clarity is repressive, which becomes the standard alibi for half-written and sometimes unwritten prose. Gayatri Spivak, a feminist literary critic and translator of Derrida, broke new ground by publishing in a scholarly book her rough notes for a lecture and a transcription of a telephone conversation with the book's editor.[16] Why not? If clarity is repressive, incoherence is subversive, sloppiness is craft.

Whatever the truth of a repressive clarity it requires specific, demonstrations, not pronouncements. The new academics gripe that newspaper critics fail to master the technical prose, but where have they shown mastery of a newspaper prose? Or where have they established its inability to express their thoughts? After all, Hegel did not simply denounce common sense and philosophy: he labored to establish the insufficiency of everyday thinking and language. This remains a significant task, but the new academics avoid it, hurrying directly to metatheory and metalanguage.

Has American academic writing suffered from a surfeit of repressive clarity? A reasonable observer might find the opposite proposition more persuasive: an excess of clotted language and concepts distort its prose. In the late 1950s C. Wright Mills attacked the sociologist Talcott Parsons for employing academic jargon. "In many academic circles today," observed Mills, "anyone who tries to write in a widely intelligible way is liable to be condemned as a 'mere literary man' or, worse still, 'a mere journalist'."

As an experiment, Mills "translated" Parsons' prose into ordinary English. For instance he "translated" a passage from Parsons that began this way: "Attachment to common values means, motivationally considered, that the actors have common 'sentiments' in support of the value patterns, which may be defined as meaning that conformity with the relevant expectations is treated as a 'good thing' relatively independently of any specific instrumental 'advantage' to be gained from such conformity, e.g. in the avoidance of negative sanctions." Mills' "translation" began: "*Or in other words*: When people share the same values, they tend to behave in accordance with the way they expect one another to behave."[17]

Mills' efforts on behalf of plain English disappeared without a trace.

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16. Gayatri Spivak, "The New Historicism: Political Commitment and the Postmodern Critic," in *The New Historicism*, ed. H. Arum Veeser (New York: Routledge, 1988).

17. Parsons cited and "translated" in C. Wright Mills, *The Sociological Imagination* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1959), pp. 218, 230-31.

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Everywhere a denunciation of repressive clarity leads to an embrace of obscurity in the name of revolutionary profundity. If clarity marks the idiom of capitalism, the vocabulary of subversion is opaque. The gate swings open, and planeloads of academics hustle through, carrying laptop computers with hard disks crammed with unreadable prose. These writings invariably nod toward Adorno or Derrida or Jameson or include a pronouncement justifying muddy language and obscure abstractions.

For instance, in a book on postmodern education, two professors condemn clarity and defend complex or "bad" writing. "It seems to us that those who call themselves progressive educators, whether feminists, Marxists or otherwise, . . . have missed the role that the 'language of clarity' plays in a dominant culture that cleverly and powerfully uses 'clear' and 'simplistic' language to systematically undermine and prevent . . . complex and critical thinking." Oppositional languages, they state, "are generally unfamiliar, provoking questions and pointing to social relations that will often appear alien and strange . . . What is at stake is not the issue of 'bad' writing, as if writing that is difficult to grapple with has nothing important to say."[18]

Richard Wolff, a Marxist economics professor, offers a more ringing defense of "bad" writing. Poststructuralist and postmodernist writing is "difficult to read" because "major shifts in ways of thinking usually interact complexly with related shifts in ways of speaking and writing. Early in the process, the new ways of writing will often be convoluted and opaque." Not only is opaque language required for complex thinking, but a brainwashed American public prizes clarity; as long as the public does not wake up, we post-Marxists will appear to be "bad" writers. What this public rejects as incomprehensible proves its value, believes Professor Wolff. "To uphold radical and Marxist ideas and to develop them in new directions would quite predictably produce writings out of tune with the prevalent presumptions and desire of the postwar public: 'bad' writings in the eyes of many."[19]

The justifications for "bad" prose show up everywhere. An English professor begins his book stating that to analyze literature is a task "no less demanding of a specialized language, than the study of sub-atomic particles or mammalian respiratory systems."[20] In other words, he will

18. Stanley Aronowitz and Henry Giroux, *Postmodern Education* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991), pp. 90-91.

19. Richard Wolff, reviewing my *The Last Intellectuals* in *Rethinkirrg Marxism* 20/1 (Spring 1989): 138-139.

20. James H. Kavanagh, *Emily Bronté* (0xford: Basil Blackwell, 1985), pp. xii-xiv.

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avoid the vernacular for an arcane and specialized vocabulary. These pronouncements are not idle threats. The professors are as good as their word: they spread "bad" writing, dreaming it challenges capitalism, as they collect their paychecks, enroll their children in private schools, and invest in real estate.

The clumsy language has been widely pilloried by conservatives and other critics. Those attacked rightly object to a method that simply pulls out stray sentences from essays and books and holds them up for ridicule. A sentence here or there proves nothing. The issue, however, is not isolated sentences, but entire essays, books, and series that move from computers to university libraries unread and unreadable. This is not simply bad writing, but bad writing elevated to a principle. To show this, of course, requires examples, even if they remain vulnerable to the reply that they are unrepresentative.

A University of Massachusetts "cultural studies" professor, writing about "effective" intellectuals, states that "the question of the status of subjugated knowledge cannot be sufficiently probed unless we also simultaneously raise the question of the intellectual/mass relationship and the underlying ideology of the individual/society paradigm. The challenge that Foucauldian thought has to take up is that of postrepresentational politics and of accounting for the polities of intellectuality in a different way." This continues for some twenty pages, when the author is inspired to clarify his argument by citing two other lucid thinkers, Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe. "Since I found Laclau and Mouffe particularly convincing on this point, I will quote from them extensively." The quote begins: "For, whereas political leadership can be grounded upon a conjunctural coincidence of interests in which the participating sectors retain their separate identity, moral and intellectual leadership requires that an ensemble of 'ideas' and 'values' be shared by a number of sectors — or, to use our own terminology, that certain subject positions traverse a number of class sectors."

Our intrepid professor, who selected this passage as especially illuminating, raises the obvious question: "I am aware that there is a problem with this reading: is this a Gramscian reading of Gramsci, or is it a poststructuralist extension or adaption of Gramsci?"[21]

A book on "recoding" history, which makes the obligatory nod toward semiotics, Baudrillard, and other French thinkers, explains why

21. R. Radhakrishnan. "Toward an Effective Intellectual," in *Intellectuals: Aesthetics, Politics, Academics*, ed. Bruce Robbins (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1990), pp. 66, 92.

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the analysis appears incomprehensible. "At the outset I acknowledge that my use of interpretants . . . is radically unfamiliar. But I argue this must be so: in the present cultural-economic conjunctions, academic discourse, in its presumed everydayness . . . leads the intellectual invasion . . . I . . . resort to a discourse that slows reading, that refuses to convince a reader by its cadence or even rightness."

Again, the author is as good as his word: in some three hundred pages from beginning to end little is lucid. "If transcendence is a permanent possibility of semiotic-intellectual destruction," runs a typical sentence, "because its minimal function is to make unthinkable the negation of that 'which ties one to reality' and holds one in place, this superfunction today is perfected in contests where language is hypervalorized as the 'indispensable,' 'needed,' 'necessary,' 'required,' and so on, basis of enculturation."

The book is so opaque it comes with a glossary, which unfortunately could itself use a glossary. For instance, under the "A's" is an explanation of "*Actantial/actant*" This "refers to the complex exchange between what a 'historical' narration allows to be the subject of doing (for example, capitalism treated as the actant of innovation or capitalism presented as the subject of dialectical transformations) and the reader's ability (generally) to acknowledge primary roles of action as necessary to a culture."[22] With that explained, a reader returns to the text.

The first sentence of a new book on education by an English professor reads as follows: "This book was instigated by the publication of the Harvard Core Curriculum Report in 1978 and was intended to respond to what I took to be an ominous educational reform initiative that, without naming it, would delegitimate the decisive, if spontaneous, disclosure of the complicity of liberal American institutions of higher learning with the state's brutal conduct of the war in Vietnam and the consequent call for opening the university to meet the demands by hitherto marginalized constituencies of American society for enfranchisement."

This book, which deserves honorable mention in any competition for the worst-written book of 1993, continues in this vein for over two hundred pages. A sentence from the conclusion reads: "If the decentering of the anthropologos informing Occidental cultural practices points to the priority of difference over identity rather than the other way around, then the projective phase of a destructive pedagogy also

22. Sande Cohen, *Historical Culture: On the Recoding of an Academic Discipline* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), pp. 2, 46, 327. See my "A New Intellectual History?" in *American Historical Review* 97 (1992), pp. 405-424.

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requires a pedagogical comportment toward the curriculum that reverses the binary terms of the principle of identity that has historically determined canon formation and knowledge production (what it is permissible to publish)." This volume is not only titled *The End of Education*, it exemplifies the end.[23]

David Lehman in his book on Paul de Man and the blight of deconstructionism paraphrases a cynical suggestion about how to make any academic essay publishable: "The first sentence should feature *hegemony*; the second, *itinerary*; the third, *foregrounding*; the fourth, *privilege* . . . There should be plenty of *de-* or *dis-* prefixes, beginning with *deconstruction* and *dismantling*, and as many *-ize* suffixes, such as *problematize*, *valorize*, *contextualize*, *totalize*. A good way to begin your *discourse* (you must always call it that) is with a nod toward Derrida, an allusion to de Man, and a determination to call into question *some binary opposition* . . . *male* and *female*, *nature* and *culture*, *center* and *periphery* . . ."[24]

A cogent reservation should be registered: some essays and books are important regardless of inept language. I once complained to an editor about a book published by his university press, which I found unreadable. He put me in my place with a single remark. "Yet, the title does quite well with us." Sales might not constitute an argument, but does indicate an audience; and even the most cynical observer would not imagine that professors buy these books exclusively for conformist reasons. Why do they? Beyond the most general answer — they find them provocative or interesting — little can be specified. The point should be conceded, however. Readability cannot — should not — be the only lens we use to inspect scholarship. Nor should it be abandoned.

As with so much radical scholarship, leftists break with the very theories they appeal to. The easy or ostentatious references to seditious thought from Marx to Nietzsche and Freud ignore the fact that these masters often — not always — were wonderful writers, and ruthless critics of pedantry and obscurantism. The original rebels did not obsessively salute their own complexity and difficulty, and scorn journalists and the educated public. If anything they did the reverse; they scorned the pedants, and turned to the public. The new academics invoke their

23. William V. Spanos, *The End of Education* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), pp. xi, 218. As Spanos explains, the 1978 Harvard Report provoked his reflections, but the book has been much expanded and revised in the intervening years. He also notes that the manuscript was rejected by an Ivy League university press on "manifestly ideological grounds." Without the courageous University of Minnesota Press, he writes, his "oppositional project" would have not seen the light of day. Some courage.

24. Lehman, *Signs of the Times*, pp. 83-84.

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names and ideas, and surrender their prose and precision.

The French took the first steps in rendering critical theories coded communications for the initiated. To explain why the land of Descartes became a prose junkyard requires a sociology of French intellectuals more than an understanding of the progress of thought. In any event, their American disciples enthusiastically followed. On the graph of readable prose the line that connects Marx to Althusser and his American followers; Freud to Lacan and his American followers: and Nietzsche to Derrida and his American followers goes straight down.

While many of his passages shine, few argue that Marx was a great stylist. He spent much effort, and hundreds of pages, however, attacking bombast. His *German Ideology* is little more than a six-hundred-page attack on philosophical pomposity. He counseled "how to proceed if you want to appear German, profound and speculative." "First of all, an abstraction is made from a fact; then it is declared that the fact is based on the abstraction." He gave an example: "*Fact*: The Cat eats the mouse. *Reflection*: Cat-nature, mouse-nature, consumption of mouse by cat = consumption of nature by nature = self-consumption of nature. *Philosophic presentation of the fact*: Devouring of the mouse by the cat is based upon the self-consumption of nature."[25]

Moreover, Marx knew something else forgotten by those who appeal to his writings: it is possible to write in different fashions for different audiences. He wrote not simply dense volumes like *Capital* but daily journalism and polemical books and pamphlets for a wider public. Works like *The Communist Manifesto*, *The Eighteenth Brumaire*, and *The Civil War in France* stand at the furthest remove from scholasticism. And even *Capital* is hardly a linguistic death valley; it contains many splendid passages. Marx himself admitted that "no one can feel the literary shortcomings of *Capital* more strongly than myself"; and he went on to quote with pride reviews that praised its "clearness" and "unusual liveliness." "In this respect the author in no way resembles . . . the majority of German scholars, who . . . write their books in a language so dry and obscure the heads of ordinary mortals are cracked by it."[26]

Is it necessary to argue that the writings of Nietzsche and Freud shine with clarity and wit? Much of their importance derives from their open and engaging prose; they were less specialists, than anti-specialists.

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25. Karl Marx and Fredriech Engels, *The German Ideology* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1964), p. 530.

26. Karl Marx. "Postface to the Second Edition," *Capital*, intro. E. Mandel (New York: Vintage, 1976), p. 99.

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Obviously some of their writings are difficult; some are dense, especially Nietzsche's, but in the main, they address themselves to educated readers, not specialists. Even when Nietzsche raises the issue of obscure texts, he raises it sharply. "It is by no means an objection to a book," he wrote, "when someone finds it unintelligible: perhaps this might just have been the intention of the author — perhaps he did not *want* to be understood by 'anyone'." Authors, he continues, sometimes seek only "the ears of those who are acoustically related to them." As for "my own case, — I do not desire that either my ignorance, or the vivacity of my temperament, should prevent me being understood by you, my friends."[27]

Throughout his writings, Nietzsche scorned the feebleness and timidity of professors. "Consider the historical student," he wrote in *The Use and Abuse of History*. "He has the 'methods' for original work, the 'correct ideas' and the airs of the master . . . A little isolated period of the past is marked out . . . He cleverly applies his method and produces something," but what is it worth? The "wisdom is rotten." The young savant has become just a cog in the "factory of science." "I am sorry to use the common jargon about slaveowners and taskmasters . . . but the words 'factory,' 'labor market,' 'auction sale,' 'practical use,' and all the auxiliaries of egoism come involuntarily to the lips in describing the younger generation of savants."

They are already "exhausted hens." "They can merely cackle more than before, because they lay eggs oftener; but the eggs are always smaller though their books are bigger."[28]

Freud, of course, was a superb stylist, a lucid and engaging writer, as Bruno Bettelheim showed in *Freud and Man's Soul*. Biographers note that the only award he won during his life was literary, the Goethe Prize in 1930. From his case histories to his theoretical speculations, his prose shimmered. He once regretted that his case histories "should read like short stories and that, as one might say, they lack the serious stamp of science." One of his case histories begins this way: "In the summer vacation of the year 189- I made an excursion in the Hohe Tauern [in the Alps] so that for a while I might forget medicine and more particularly the neuroses. I had almost succeeded in this when one day I turned aside from the main road to climb a mountain which

27. Friedrich Nietzsche, *Joyful Wisdom*, intro. K. F. Reinhardt (New York: Frederick Ungar, 1964), p. 349.

28. Nietzsche, *The Use and Abuse of History*, intro. J. Kraft (New York: Bobbs-Merrill, 1957), pp. 45-46.

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lay somewhat apart and which was renowned for its views and for its well-run refuge hut. I reached the top after a strenuous climb and, feeling refreshed and rested, was sitting deep in contemplation of the charm of the distant prospect. I was so lost in thought that at first I did not connect it with myself when these words reached my ears. 'Are you a doctor, sir?' But the question was addressed to me, and by the rather sulky-looking girl of perhaps eighteen who had served my meal and had been spoken to by the landlady as 'Katharina.' Coming to myself I replied: 'Yes, I'm a doctor: but how did you know that?'."[29]

This is Freud: not a short story or the opening of a novel or caper. Nor is it an American Freudian or psychoanalytic literary critic. While his theoretical speculations lacked this eloquence, Freud regularly pitched his writings to the nonspecialist, and in fact unsuccessfully fought the specialists, the medical doctors. "It is not without satisfaction," he stated in his first lecture in the United States, "that I have learnt that the majority of my audience are not members of the medical profession. You have no need to be afraid that any special medical knowledge will be required for following what I have to say."[30]

In several of his writings he leavened his reflections by including an "opponent" who raises objections to his train of thought. "An enquiry," he explained, "which proceeds like a monologue" may evade criticism by becoming overdecisive. "I shall therefore imagine that I have an opponent who follows my argument with mistrust, and here and there I shall allow him to interject some remarks." Nor was this simply a ploy. Freud gave the "opponent" many pages to vigorously denounce his argument. " 'That sounds splendid! A race of men who have renounced illusions'," sputters the opponent. " 'We seem now to have exchanged roles: you emerge as an enthusiast . . . I stand for the claims of reason . . . What you have been expounding seems to me to be built upon errors . . .'."[31]

Even Adorno can be defended against his devotees. The easy references to his convoluted and abstract sentences malign his *oeuvre*. From the iridescent aphorisms of *Minima Moralia* to the polemical *Jargon of Authenticity* Adorno's work explodes academic prose. If anything, his writing is deliberately anti-academic, a term he once embraced. A

29. Josef Breuer and Sigmund Freud, *Studies on Hysteria*, tr. and ed. by J. and A. Strachey (New York: Penguin, 1980), pp. 231, 190.

30. Freud, *Two Short Accounts of Psycho-Analysis*, tr. and ed. by J. Strachey (New York: Penguin, 1953), p. 32. On some of these issues, see my *The Repression of Psychoanalysis* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986).

31. Freud, *The Future of an Illusion*, tr. and ed. by J. Strachey (New York: Norton, 1958), pp. 26, 65.

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student protested that Adorno's criticism of Heidegger was too polemical, lacking collegiality; Adorno replied that if philosophy is to be more than a trite enterprise, it must "burst the concept of the academic."[32] Virtually all of his sentences display a compressed energy and corrosive intellect worlds apart from standard American academic prose. Pedantic references, indifferent sentences, and empty abstractions do not litter his writings. His incomparable essay "Cultural Criticism and Society" opened this way: "To anyone in the habit of thinking with his ears, the words "cultural criticism" [*Kulturkritik*] must have an offensive ring, not merely because, like "automobile," they are pieced together from Latin and Greek. The words recall a flagrant contradiction. The cultural critic is not happy with civilization, to which alone he owes his discontent."[33]

On the other hand, Fredric Jameson, who highly esteems Adorno, writes in a peculiar American baroque: a gray mash of half-written sentences punctuated by tooting horns and waving pennants. A chapter in his book on Adorno begins with this sentence: "In fact, far from being an "open" or aleatory composition, [Adorno's] *Negative Dialectics* imitates — as over a great distance, with radically different building materials, and in that "prodigious erosion of contours" of which Gide, following Nietzsche, likes to speak — the plan of Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*. (I am tempted to say that it *wraps* it as a postmodern reconstruction — glass shell, arches — wraps an older monument; except that Adorno is not postmodern and the more fitting analogy would be what Thomas Mann does to Goethe's Faust.)"[34]

The point needs no reinforcement; to move from Freud, Nietzsche, and Marx to their French interpreters and American followers is to enter a different universe. The pedantry, self-satisfaction, and academicism which the original critical theorists despised metastasizes in the disciples, where it threatens to become not simply a lesion but the whole of their work. In the name of subversion the new academics throttle language, confounding rigor mortis with rigor. In the 1950s Edmund Wilson wondered how someone could be "set up as an authority on teaching the young when he was not himself sufficiently well-educated to have mastered the rudiments of writing." These thoughts breathe of

32. T. W. Adorno, *Philosophische Terminologie. Zur Einleitung*, Vol. 1 (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1973), pp. 161-166.

33. T. W. Adorno, *Prisms*, tr. by Shierry and Samuel Weber (London: Neville Spearman, n.d.), p. 19.

34. Fredric Jameson, *Late Marxism: Adorno, or The Persistence of the Dialectic* (London: Verso, 1990), p. 73. See the essential review by Robert Hullot-Kentor in *Telos* 89 (Fall 1991), pp. 167-177.

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simpler times, especially Wilson's suggestion that English professors might improve the writing of their colleagues. "As for my experience with articles by experts in anthropology and sociology, it has led me to conclude that the requirement, in my ideal university, of having the papers in every department passed by a professor of English might result in revolutionizing these subjects — if indeed the second of them survived at all."[35]

The issue is more than style. The new academics see themselves not simply at but as the cutting edge. They celebrate themselves, their prose, ideas, and professionalism. If this is radicalism, it is a new type, for it looks very much like old-fashioned progressivism or twentieth-century liberalism. This is not necessarily bad. As the hopes for socialism and revolution recede, if not dissipate, leftist intellectuals redefine their role; they view themselves as what they are, college teachers and scholars with academic debates, curricula, and hiring their realities.

So far so good: this might be dubbed a victory for realism or truth. Leftist intellectuals no longer pretend they are peasants or workers or guerrillas. Yet they slide from an old to a new illusion; they are not outsiders heaving dynamite, but insiders cracking codes. They become cheerleaders with a difference. When they laud campus progress, professionalism, and scholarship, they are advancing a radical agenda. They justify an insular academicism in the name of revolution.

Andrew Ross, a Princeton English professor, presents the new program. He writes that "the mantle of opposition" no longer belongs to an autonomous avant-garde, or urban intellectuals or bohemians. To whom does it belong? Professors. A "reactionary consensus" loyal to "narratives of decline" bemoans the fragmentation and academization that Ross applauds; now professors subvert disciplines. "Professional intellectuals who are not self-loathing have come to insist that it is necessary to examine their institutional affiliations in order to understand and transform the codes of power which are historically specific to their disciplinary discourses. In this respect, the recent generation of post-structuralist thinkers each applied themselves, in ways unavailable to the classical Marxist tradition, to the kinds of critique necessary for examining and redefining the intellectual's relation to the institution."[36]

Ross hits all the buttons: the new academics are the new radicals;

35. Edmund Wilson, *A Piece of My Mind* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Cudahy, 1956), p. 164.

36. Andrew Ross, *No Respect: Intellectuals and Popular Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1989), pp. 210-211, 229.

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departmental corridors are the new trenches; the tools of specialist scholarship are the new means of warfare; and the combatants, "the recent generation of poststructuralist thinkers," surpass their dotty predecessors. Old fogies committed to "narratives of decline" fail to see the brighter future. In one way or another, the new academics repeat, and revel, in these themes.

In a recent collection on academics, Bruce Robbins, an English professor, exults over the successes of professors. An unfolding debate, Robbins informs us, takes up "the institutional forms the energies of the 60s have taken." Of course, Robbins rejects the "narrative of decline." He is upbeat, like other critical theorists, since the sixties led to one evident achievement: left-wing English professors. He trumpets that the title of a recent book by the English professor Paul Bové, *Intellectuals in Power*, "can no longer seem a contradiction in terms."[37]

The phrase "intellectuals in power" or "intellectuals in politics" may be no contradiction. Thirty years ago James Joll wrote a book titled *Three Intellectuals in Politics*. The subjects of Joll and Bové's books suggest the progress of self-delusion. Joll surveyed the careers of people like Léon Blum, the French socialist Prime Minister, who led a Popular Front government during the Spanish Civil War; and Walther Rathenau, a German industrialist and sometime government official in World War I. These were people who not simply wrote and thought about matters of the mind but played roles in the state; they were intellectuals in power. A couple of decades later, who are the intellectuals in power to American English professors? English professors.[38]

More recently, Theodore Draper has reflected on "intellectuals in politics." Who are his subjects? Not English professors but people like Woodrow Wilson, Daniel Moynihan, and Henry Kissinger, individuals with "actual service in government." Apart from entering governments or political movements, Draper doubted intellectuals have power. "Intellectuals may have influence but they almost never have power."[39]

The new academics endlessly repeat that we are in the midst of an exciting explosion of "theory," as if all theories were the same and all were good. The fetish of theory, like that of complexity, anoints the

37. Bruce Robbins, "Introduction," in *Intellectuals: Aesthetics, Politics, Academics*, pp. ix-xxvii. See my review in *Telos* 85 (Fall 1990), pp. 149-156.

38. James Joll, *Three Intellectuals in Politics* (New York: Harper & Row, 1960); Paul A. Bové, *Intellectuals in Power* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986). There are other differences in these books. Joll wrote in English; Bové, an English professor, did not.

39. Theodore Draper, "Intellectuals in Politics," in his *Present History* (New York: Random House, 1983), pp. 400-426.

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professionals, keeping out the unaccredited. It also testifies to the thriving idealism of postmaterialists. Subversive theories explode in the campus quads, thrilling the academics. "Gray, my dear friend, is every theory / And green alone life's golden tree," instructs Mephistopheles the student in Goethe's *Faust*.[40]

"Philosophy is blooming," roars a philosopher. It has "never before been in as great shape as it is today. All topics are available; all its applications are legitimate; all methods are feasible; all interdisciplinary connections are accessible." If this is not enough, we are told that more philosophers live today than "there have been from the dark beginnings of history up to 1900." Another cheerleader enthuses, "We are seeing the emergence of a vital academic left counterculture. One consequence is a veritable explosion of new theoretical paradigms for political and cultural critique."[41]

Progress bewitches the new academics; although they appeal to theories that repudiated it, they write under the star of relentless improvement. Nietzsche and Freud held dim views of progress; and the Marxism of Lukács and Gramsci that filtered into European thought repudiated the idea of mechanical advancement. The American followers, again, blithely reverse this, revealing their unbreakable links to positive thinking; they twitch at any hint of "narratives of decline." To imply that something might be lost in history; that things may worsen: these violate the first principle of progress.

Jonathan Culler, a Cornell University English professor, also protests "the crisis narratives" that blame professionalization and academization. Culler stoutly maintains "we must assert the value not just of specialization but of professionalization also, explaining how professionalization makes thought possible." Culler turns misty-eyed on the virtues of specialization; it gives rise to "serious" "works of criticism or scholarship," not to be confused with "newspaper articles," "works of popularization,"

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40. *Goethe's Faust*, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Anchor Books, 1990), p. 207 [1, 2038-2040). "The most significant development in literary studies over the last twenty-five years," writes a critic of departmental cheerleading, "has been the boom in literary theory . . . That theory . . . separates the professor from the literary amateur and, in effect, bars the amateur from critical debate." Brian McCrea, *Addison and Steele are Dead: The English Department, Its Canon, and the Professionalization of Literary Criticism* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1990), p. 149.

41. Hector-Neri Castaneda, "Philosophy as a Science and as a Worldview," in *The Institution of Philosophy*, ed. Avner Cohen and Marcelo Dascal (La Salle, Ill.: Open Court, 1989), pp. 35, 39. Nancy Fraser, *Unruly Practices: Power, Discourse and Gender in Contemporary Social Theory* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989), p. 2. What sort of "vital left academic counterculture" prospers in a society without a left or a counter-culture?

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or "especially commentary." It leads to the judicious and democratic judgments by peers. "While reducing capriciousness and favoritism in important decisions, this progress in professionalism shifts power from the vertical hierarchy of the institutions that employ a critic to a horizontal system of evaluation. Critical writing, which is the medium of exchange of this system, thus becomes central to the professional situation and identity of teachers of literature."[42]

In themselves these statements are hardly noteworthy. Yet not a public relations official, but a leading literary critic offers these banal celebrations of academic professionalism. Moreover, this is a critical theorist in the school of Marx, Freud, Nietzsche, Derrida, Baudrillard, and Foucault, whose teachings challenge capitalism, hierarchy, domination, and hegemony. Appropriated by American academics, what does a mountain of subversive thought add up to? Gushings over bureaucratization and professionalization. Advertisements for themselves, their positions, and their universities.

Once critical theorists denounced the market as corrupting thought. No longer. With some exceptions postmodern subversives now sing its praises.[43] "Critical writing" is "the medium of exchange" for the new scholars, states Culler, which means that attacking hierarchy and patriarchy spells cash and promotion. Culler loves the free market because it leads to competition and innovation. He applies the wisdom of Capitalism 101 to competing departments and scholars. "Competition for money and positions" encourages "innovative enterprises"; and competition between schools "creates a situation in which departments are expected to vie with departments at other universities for eminence, both by attempting to hire their most distinguished critics and by encouraging their members to seek greater professional standing." Again, these statements are unexceptional — if made about the frozen pizza industry or a football franchise.

Culler's survey of "Criticism and the American University" reads like a guide for the investor in the futures market of criticism. What schools or individuals look promising? Harvard has been in the "doldrums." Berkeley, though its emphasis has shifted, has remained a "major" force. "Duke, which in 1985-7 repeated on a grander scale Buffalo's experiment of the 1960s, hiring a number of distinguished

42. Jonathan Culler, *Framing the Sign: Criticism and Its Institutions* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1988), pp. 30, 55.

43. Fredric Jameson is one exception; see his "Postmodernism and the Market," in his *Postmodernism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1991).

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senior literary theorists, will provide an interesting test of the possibility of creating a new theoretically-orientated program that will have a decisive impact on literary studies." Investors take note. Instruct your broker to buy Duke critical theory futures.

The lingo of theoretical breakthroughs and explosions partakes of the language of the market because it is a market. Talk of new paradigms slips into the idiom of new items and new marketing strategies. Advanced theory sounds very much like advanced capitalism. Theoretical innovations "can occur only if we reflect critically and boldly about just what the new developments mean and about how they may be capitalized on to devise new meanings for 'collective research in the humanities'."

In other words, states J. Hillis Miller, a leading critical theorist, we need more money, travel, and computers in order to advance thought. "Technological developments such as tape recorders, xeroxing, word processing computers, and relatively inexpensive telephoning and travel by jetplane obviously are necessary to make this possible."[44] This is the wisdom of critical thinking in a postindustrial age: critical thought "obviously" requires air travel, xeroxing, and computers. These insights are uncomfortably close to the remarks of Professor Zapp, David Lodge's satire of a hustling academic in *Small World*. "There are three things which have revolutionized academic life in the last twenty years," notes Zapp. "Jet travel, direct-dialling telephones and the Xerox machine." "The radical academic," comments Harold Fromm, "exhibits the verbal trappings and forms of Marxist renunciation while acting as a paradigmatic acquisitive capitalist."[45]

At the end of the radical theorizing project is a surprise: a celebration of academic hierarchy, professions, and success. Never has so much criticism wielded so much affirmation. From Foucault the professors learned that power and institutions saturate everything. Power is universal; complicity with power is universal, and this means university practices and malpractices are no better or worse than anything else. After decades of imported skepticism, critical theorists simply defend the facts of elitism and professionalism; the arguments turn tautological and circular. We do what we do; and we are who we are. The effort to deconstruct ideas and values leads to blessing the sociology of power.

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44. J. Hillis Miller, "Face to Face," in *The States of "Theory": History, Art and Critical Discourse*, ed. D. Carroll (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990), p. 286.

45. David Lodge, *Small World* (New York: Warner Books, 1991), p.50. Harold Fromm, *Academic Capitalism and Literary Value* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1991), p. 252. Lodge's book was first published in 1984.

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With Stanley Fish, a leading Duke University English professor, this conclusion is spelled out. In the name of radical understanding the facts are heralded as the final understanding. Fish argued against the policy in academic journals of "blind submission." In evaluating articles for publication, professional journals send submissions to experts or "referees" for judgment; in order to eliminate or minimize bias, the author's name is removed. Inasmuch as the author is unknown, in principle equality is established. An article submitted by a new assistant professor at Nowheresville Community College will be judged in exactly the same manner as that by a Harvard chaired professor.

Fish objects. "Blind submission" assumes an essay can be judged on its "intrinsic merits"; it posits a neutral process of selection. This is a fiction; everything is biased and "political." For this reason who wrote an essay and what position this person holds in the profession are relevant. "Merit is inseparable from the structure of the profession and therefore the fact that someone occupies a certain position in that structure cannot be irrelevant to the assessment of what he or she produces." In other words, the sociology and the politics of the profession constitute the judgment of merit. The writings of chaired professors at major universities are obviously more valuable than writings by Professor Nobody at Nowhere State. Why? Because they are chaired professors. Fish does not mince words. "I am against blind submission because the fact that my name is attached to an article greatly increases its chance of being accepted."[46]

The rank careerism would be difficult to surpass, which is hardly altered by Fish's commitment to left and liberal causes. Status and prestige within a profession determine the value of one's contribution, which is evaluated by one's status and prestige. Fish does not deplore, but praises this woeful situation. Like Culler, he easily uses the language of the market; and as with Culler, what first might appear as a denunciation is actually a celebration of intellectual marketing. To a small-fry critic complaining that Fish is swallowing the little guys, Fish retorts: of course. Referring to Foucault and other French luminaries, Fish gives an elementary lesson in intellectual capitalism. Like anyone else, Fish sells his stuff. "The truth is that professional capital, like any other, can only grow by being expended; professional critics must put their funds into circulation if they are to see them increase. In the case

46. Stanley Fish, "No Bias, No Merit: The Case Against Blind Submission," *PMLA* 103 (1988), pp. 739-748.

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of this profession, circulation means (among other things) reading for journals and presses, writing recommendations, refereeing for presses and foundations, merchandising one's graduate students, recruiting for one's department, organizing conferences, appearing at conferences."[47]

Some are not as upset about this state of affairs. Terry Caesar is a professor at what he calls a "second-rate" university (Clarion University in Pennsylvania), where they teach a lot and publish little. He reflects on the elitism endemic to literary studies. The same scholars who attack hierarchy embrace it; the same professors who "deconstruct" and "decenter" structures of domination praise academic structures of domination. The leading journals print articles and letters from leading professors at leading schools. When Caesar engages an eminent theorist in conversation at a conference, he or she quickly loses interest upon learning where Caesar teaches.

Caesar served on a humanities committee with some luminaries from Yale and UCLA. They were to judge and fund candidates' proposals; institutional affiliations were supposed to be irrelevant. As Caesar learned quickly, this was not exactly the case. The institutional affiliation of the candidate mattered most. At one point Caesar argued for the proposal of a candidate from Bates College, a small liberal arts school. After all, the candidate had published several books. The UCLA professor would have none of it. First of all, Bates had no graduate school; second of all, Bates and its candidate were second-rate. "UCLA looked right at me . . . 'Put it this way. All right, he's got books. But if he were any good would he still be at Bates?' " "I couldn't answer. I was speechless, silenced: everything rises that deserves to rise, because if it hasn't risen it hasn't deserved to . . . What's first-rate is finally and fatefully separable from what's second-rate, or else it wouldn't be first-rate."[48]

Gerald Graff's *Beyond the Culture Wars* is one of the first book- length replies to the conservative critics of higher education. Graff is well equipped for the role. He is an English professor who teaches at a major university; he has written several books about the state of literary criticism, and in recent years he has lectured widely about the canon and curriculum. He advocates "teaching the conflicts." The very disputes about the curriculum should inform the curriculum. Students

47. Stanley Fish, "Reply," *PMLA* 104 (1989), p. 220.

48. Terry Caesar, "On Teaching at a Second-Rate University," *South Atlantic Quarterly* 90/3 (Summer 1991), pp. 458, 464-465. Reprinted in his *Conspiring with Forms* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1992).

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must be brought into the debate as to what books and authors should be taught. An honest discussion about the controversy will draw students to the materials; they will begin to understand the issues that permeate reading and writing.

Beyond the Culture Wars evidences Graff's openness, good sense, and desire to engage an audience. From its first sentence, Graff shows a willingness to break with academic mandarinism. "The insularity of my department, my courses and my circle of professional contacts," he notes, has kept outsiders at bay. "The very organization of academic life works against [clarity]." His book is an effort to step out, correct the misconceptions, and offer some ideas. In many ways Graff is successful. His book is plainly written and argued. He makes a good case for enlarging the curriculum to include disputes about it.

Clarity is not the problem; and I will leave aside Graff's curriculum recommendations to consider his larger orientation. As a major public statement by a left literary critic, *Beyond the Culture Wars* is not marred but permeated by an ethos that it shares with much critical thought, academic boosterism. Graff shows himself as less a critic than a cheerleader of professional life. This is not a foible or weakness, but structures his argument and approach. Graff recommends the approach, words, and style of elite English professors as the cure for university ills.

Even as he gulps the fresh air, Graff repeats a familiar gripe: journalists and their readers cannot understand what academics are up to. "Few readers of the popular press are in a position to recognize misrepresentations of academic practices." Graff illustrates one misconception, what he calls "the myth of the vanishing classics," that circulates in newspapers. Graff states that this myth is " provably false," if only journalists took the trouble to check the evidence. As a case in point he cites a declaration that Alice Walker's novel *The Color Purple* is taught in more English courses than Shakespeare's plays.

Graff aptly shows that this sentence is quoted and requoted in the press, as if it were proof of something. No one checks the facts, as Graff will do, conclusively showing it is false. How does Graff do this? He canvasses the courses taught over several years in the English Department at Northwestern University and finds that many more students read Shakespeare than Alice Walker.

Yet Graff is no more convincing than the journalists he decries. For starters, Graff uses "course description pamphlets," not actual syllabuses, to find out what titles are being read. These pamphlets are hardly reliable as a tally of titles. Produced by a department for prospective

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students, they may list books, but not all the books or the books for that particular semester. Moreover, when Graff states that he found "eight courses that required at least six plays by Shakespeare," we see the hand on the scale. Big English Departments have upper-level courses on Shakespeare, which English majors might take, but the issue really is what is taught in the introductory English classes, the only literature most students will get. Here Graff has nothing to say

The real problem is what Graff omits: how relevant is the curriculum of Northwestern, an elite private school, for the curriculum of the rest of the United States? "The curriculum of students at elite colleges," to again cite Clifford Adelman, "is so different from that followed by the other 97% that it is irrelevant to discussions."[49] Even if this is overstated, some recognition of his privileged sample is necessary, but for Graff the whole world looks very much like the leafy suburb where Northwestern is located (and where Graff taught). "There is no reason to think Northwestern is exceptional," he states, when there is every reason. What's his proof? Duke University, where students are also reading Shakespeare.[50]

Whether Alice Walker is taught more than Shakespeare is probably beside the point. But Graff comes out firing; this allegation is "provably false." The journalists and conservative critics are sloppy and fail to check things out. Insider academics like Graff know what's up. He'll show lazy academy bashers what a real argument looks like. Here are the facts, but Graff has few facts; he is hardly persuasive.

The real concern of Graff lies elsewhere, advancing a curriculum that confronts conflicts. His argument rests on the model of elite English professors with their penchant for theoretical disputes. Some object to the ode to theory; Graff surmises that the "hostility" to theory is powerful because it is based on "resentment" and "anxieties" of modern life. "To those who have never reconciled themselves to the academization of literature," Graff writes, the obsession with theory seems like a betrayal of the common reader and literature. Graff has more than reconciled himself to "the academization of literature." He wants to spread it; he believes in it; he loves it.

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49. Clifford Adelman, *Tourists in Our Own Land: Cultural Literacies and the College Curriculum* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Education, 1992), p. vi.

50. Graff also draws on two MLA surveys, but again these are mainly beside the point. One uses catalog descriptions of courses required for English majors at four-year colleges; the other surveys upper-level courses in literature. Neither of these bears on the basic English courses required for all AA or BA students.

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Graff's enthusiasm is infectious: he loves everything about academia: jargon, colleagues, and conferences. These are his reference points. They are also his weakness, for his argument proceeds sociologically; it is circular and self-validating. We should teach students to talk, think, and write as we do. Why? Because this is what we do. We are professionals, major professors at major universities, and growing up means learning what adults like us do.

The truism parades its banality. Success is proof. Why should the academic *status quo* be elevated to a religion? Graff barely asks. As with Stanley Fish, the "discipline" determines what is to be thought or said. Students should be taught to join or at least follow what the "discipline" is doing. What is the discipline doing? It is doing what it is doing. A more conformist project could hardly be imagined.

Students must become aware of the "discourse community" and its "agenda of problems, issues and questions." Otherwise they will not know what to say or write. Even in choosing a paper topic, a student must have "a sense of what *other people* are saying, of what the state of the discussion is." One can almost hear Professor Graff reproaching a student, "No, no, don't do a paper on 'the idea of the soul in Emerson.' We don't do that any longer. The profession has moved on. We do gender now, and race and hierarchy."

Students also need "special help to produce a kind of literary-critical talk" or professional jargon. Why? Because the profession uses jargon as a useful "shorthand." "If I say 'We need to problematize that distinction,' it saves" a much wordier formulation. Moreover, academic jargon subverts bourgeois hegemony. "Often underlying such jargon, however, is a kind of alienation device like those employed by the playwright Bertold Brecht — a deliberate attempt to alienate readers from their normal expectations."

This is good. Brecht sought to block the identification of an audience with characters by making stage actions and utterances appear "strange" or "alien." This "new artistic principle" would lead audiences to historical awareness; they would understand the transience of bourgeois society and "the necessity and the possibility of remodelling society."[51] In academic writing, left professors use the same principle. The unsuspecting reader picks up an essay of criticism anticipating the graceful prose of Matthew Arnold or Alfred Kazin; instead he or she is assaulted

51. Bertold Brecht, "Alienation Effects in Chinese Acting," in *Brecht on Theatre*, ed. John Willet (New York: Hill and Wang, 1964), pp. 96-98.

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by the blaring horns and backfiring of an academic roadster. Chastened, the reader draws back, understands bourgeois illusions and the need for socialist transformation.

If you believe this, you'll believe anything. Academic prose does not draw on the alienation effect but the love of alienation. Graff becomes lyrical about jargon, but his argument is always instrumental. We talk and write with jargon, and if you want to join the big time, you have to learn the codes and passwords. Graff is not shy; for all the chatter about "discourse" and "problematize" the bottom line is power and money and jobs. Like Culler, Fish, and other critical theorists, Graff embraces the intellectual market. "The ability to . . . command the discourse about what tests and other social phenomena mean, to control what has come to be called 'spin' — these are important forms of symbolic capital in a society where information is increasingly a key source of power. It seems time to come to terms with this fact . . . If we recognize that the control of spin can be an important issue in presidential elections, we should also be able to recognize that it is an issue in reading and teaching literature. . . "

Nor does he stop with jargon, spin, and accumulating capital. Graff blesses the new scholarship. The usual complaint that scholarship is overspecialized and unreadable misses the point. Graff loves the stuff. Nowadays standard scholarship broaches big issues on gender or hierarchy, unlike the traditional scholarship. "To be sure, humanities research still *looks* as specialized as ever because its paradigm-shattering arguments are still couched in highly-specialized vocabularies." But a doctoral dissertation like "The Construction of Gender in the Later Romantic Lyric" is actually "broad, generalized, and ambitiously political."[52]

Finally, Graff loves academic conferences; and he hopes they can be replicated in undergraduate life. "I would like to round off this discussion . . . by outlining an idea that is not yet in widespread use . . . This would be an adoption of the academic conference or symposium to the needs of the undergraduate curriculum. One often senses in the heightened atmosphere of today's professional conferences that the eagerness with which these events are attended stems from the fact that they are providing the kind of intellectual community that is sadly missing from the home campus . . ."

Graff prescribes hustling conferences of upscale professors fleeing their campuses as the cure, not the disease. He confuses networking

52. James Atlas is more convincing about the new scholarship; see his *The Book Wars* (Knoxville: Whittle Direct Books, 1990), pp. 51-52.

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with teaching, back-scratching with scholarship, jargon with thinking. The scramble for self-advancement, not the crackle of thought, heats up the atmosphere at professional conferences.[53]

For most of the twentieth century, left-wing professors in the United States were a rare, if not endangered species. Small and homogeneous faculties were inhospitable to radicals. Typically American leftist intellectuals were writers and editors, not professors. Moreover, during national crises universities regularly purged the few radical professors. From the firing of Scott Nearing at the University of Pennsylvania in 1915 through McCarthyism in the 1950s, higher education sent its radical teachers packing.

With the expansion of the universities and a shift in political temperament in the 1960s, this changed. Only in a few fields, however, did a left achieve anything like a presence. What kind of presence? With what kind of impact? Conservatives have long attributed the unraveling of America to radical professors, and sometimes journalists and film people. The left professors agree with this exalted appreciation of their role. They see themselves as the cutting edge of the movement for social justice and reform. They do not take kindly to skepticism about their impact or genius. In *The Last Intellectuals* I raised some questions about the academization of intellectuals and their public profile. From *The New Republic* to *The Village Voice* and *New Left Review* leftist professors howled. "Look at me! Look at us!" they cried. "We're smart, hip, important, and influential!" I was accused of a class A felony in the criminal code of progressivism: nostalgia. For the new academics things only get better.

Some things do get better; and left academics do some of the pushing. The most successful new areas like Feminist and African-American Studies are a product of extra-campus movements, and in turn influence those movements, but that influence is difficult to define. The impact of academic radicals is most evident on campuses themselves. Black, feminist, gay, and Latino groups constitute political and intellectual campus realities that cannot be ignored.

Their strength is simultaneously their weakness; their causes become exclusively campus causes — curriculum, hiring, speech codes. If this makes sense, it also evidences a narrowing. David Bromwich recounts an incident at the Yale Law School. A white student was raped

53. See Camille Paglia's devastating "Junk Bonds and Corporate Raiders," in her *Sex, Art and American Culture* (New York: Vintage, 1992).

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in New Haven by two black men; afterward black law students found racist messages in their mailboxes. From this emerged race-sensitivity workshops at Yale run by outside race consultants, which were backed by the administration and students, and a boycott of classes, as if the Law School itself were the assailant or guilty party. Bromwich comments: "In the early sixties, law students like these, both black and white, would have seized any occasion to throw their weight on the liberal side of struggles in real communities, where people spend more than three years, where they are compelled to live and to die. But for such students now, the struggle they know what to do with takes place in a community exactly the size of a law school."[54]

Incessant leftist bleating and self-aggrandizement should not provoke a blanket dismissal. Over the last thirty years the accumulated activity of younger academics has renovated several disciplines; this is no mean accomplishment. Gary B. Nash, a UCLA history professor, remarks on the "wholesale changes" in history. A few decades ago, American history rarely went beyond political events and the happenings of a white male society. Now "African-American history, women's history, and labor history are taught in most colleges and universities." Other schools teach Asian-American, Native American, and Latino history. Nash notes that the *Harvard Guide to Afro-American History*, when completed, will list thousands of books, articles, and dissertations, "an enormous flowering of scholarship."[55]

Revitalized and enlarged scholarly fields enrich us all, but especially teachers and students. Of course, students do not remain students forever; and students have parents and friends. For these reasons new teachings make their way through society. The line dividing education and society blurs. Especially in secondary schooling, the new scholarship causes waves as it leads to revised textbooks.[56]

The charge that left professors are narrowly engaged with their disciplines and campuses can be convincingly answered by pointing to the millions of students who take courses, passing on to other stations in life. Many left professors justify their politics by their students and teaching. The impact of teaching, however, remains incalculable. Moreover, the most prominent left professors work at the best schools, where teaching is minimal.

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54. Bromwich, *Politics By Other Means*, pp. 35-36.
55. Gary B. Nash, *Contentions* 1/3 (Spring 1990), pp. 2-3.
56. Nash has himself been involved in writing a new multicultural textbook series; see Robert Reinhold, "Class Struggle," *New York Times Magazine*, September 29, 1991, pp. 26 ff.

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The bulk of teaching proceeds at the much maligned "second-rate" universities and the community colleges. If teaching is the object, why not teach at these schools? Many liberals and leftists do; we infrequently hear from them, since they have little time to publish and explain themselves. The others, who teach at elite schools, do not address teaching at a popular institution as a political choice. On occasion, a leftist pities himself, suffering the "contradiction" of teaching a few elite students about mass suffering. "Poor me," laments Louis Kampf, an MIT English professor, "I have a nifty little job at a big famous place, but I feel depressed . . . For years I've written articles telling people that universities are . . . the ideological servants of the ruling elites." No need to worry. As Professor Struggle explains, after wine and a pasta dinner he felt better.[57]

A larger public knows, or doesn't know, of radical professors because of their writings, which include more than scholarly articles and monographs; they encompass textbooks, opinion pieces, and sometimes films and popular books. It would be wrong to dismiss this collective *oeuvre*; through Feminist Studies, social history, Latino and African-American Departments, and revised canons it percolates throughout higher education and society. On the other hand, one need not be a doomsayer to wonder about the quality of the scholarly writing — its pretentiousness, cynicism, jargon, elitism, and cheerleading — and the dearth of public writing.

Early in the century William James pondered the role of colleges and the college-educated; he could not be very precise. Colleges should have something to do with producing better individuals, cultivating a certain tone, and aiding democracy. He feared colleges were failing on these scores; and he wondered if the popular and literary magazines of the day, the so-called ten-cent magazines, were taking up the slack. "It would be a pity," he wrote in 1908, "If any future historian were to have to write words like these: 'By the middle of the twentieth century the higher institutions of learning had lost all influence over public opinion in the United States. But the mission of raising the tone of democracy, which they had proved so lamentally unfitted to exert, was assumed with rare enthusiasm . . . by a new educational power . . . private literary adventures, commonly designated in the market by the affectionate name of ten-cent magazines'."[58]

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57. *Louis Kampf, "Annals of Academic Life," in Left Politics and the Literary Profession*, p. 309.

58. William James, "Social Value of the College-Bred," in James, *Writings 1902-1910* (New York: Library Classics of the United States, 1987), p. 1248.

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Symposium on Russell Jacoby's *Dogmatic Wisdom*:

Scapegoating Capitalism

Paul Piccone

New Problems, Old Solutions

Today's institutions of higher education are no longer merely entrusted with the transmission of the predominant culture from one generation to the next, as was the case before the 1960s. In those "good old days" it was still possible, following Gramsci, to criticize its agents — the "traditional" intellectuals — from the perspective of their "organic" counterparts allegedly committed to change and collective human emancipation. The modern elite university is concerned primarily with the reconfiguration, extension and marketing of knowledge and culture. During the past 30 years it has become big business, embroiled with practically every aspect of social reality, first and foremost the consciousness industry. Consequently, its hired intellectuals have long since ceased to be either "traditional" or "organic": they are now "entrepreneurial." This is why what was once the university's main function, teaching, is something professors now engage in as their main task only in community colleges or other backwater institutions. In "real" universities it has deteriorated to the level of a secondary activity far less important than, e.g., "research and development." Not surprising, nowdays most undergraduate courses are usually farmed out to graduate students and teaching them has come to be regarded, at best, as a necessary nuisance. Commercialism has penetrated all institutions: everything seems to have succumbed to the logic of the cash-nexus. Thus the current turmoil in all educational institutions — from kindergardens all the way to professional schools — is not just a relatively irrelevant problem relegated to one profession or one particular industry but reflects a broader social crisis.

This is the general framework within which Russell Jacoby's *Dogmatic Wisdom* analyzes American education.[1] The problem he immediately runs into, however, is that the heated debates and cultural wars raging in practically all universities and in the various scholarly analyses of the crisis do not seem to have much to do with what he identifies as the real problems. As the book's subtitle bluntly announces, these cultural wars tend to "divert education and distract

1. Russell Jacoby, *Dogmatic Wisdom: How the Culture Wars Divert Education and Distract America* (New York: Doubleday, 1994).

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America." As usual, ideology and reality do not correspond. Thus, in the idiosyncratically Adornian style which has become his trademark, he undertakes to cut through the various academic smokescreens of both the Left-liberal establishment and its neo-conservative critics to locate the real problems with American education as well as with the society within which it thrives. What he finds is that the endless debates concerning the character of the curriculum evaporate with the realization that in fact there has been no curriculum anywhere for years and that frantic efforts to resurrect particularistic cultures fade into irrelevance under the irresistible homogenizing pressure of consumerism. In a society where "both rich and poor wear Levi's" (28) and everyone wants the same things (158-159) the vindication of cultural particularity can only rate as a futile quixotic undertaking or, one might add, a self-serving careerist strategy by substandard "minority" intellectuals seeking to grab a piece of the academic action which would have otherwise remained beyond their reach. Similarly, addressing some neo-conservatives' obsession with the new "hordes" of immigrants allegedly flooding American cities, Jacoby has little difficulty documenting how during the last century the only things that have changed in this regard are the immigrants' accents and their skin pigmentation, not their quantity. As for recent "politically correct" efforts to curtail free speech, there is nothing radically new there either: those in power, whether Right or Left, have always been in favor of restrictions, those on the fringe always against them. This is why Jacoby dismisses much of the ideological chatter heard nowadays in universities, especially in the most prestigious ones. According to his analysis, the real problem with most contemporary educational institutions (rather than the few elite universities which are constantly scrutinized) is that there is an inadequate allocation of resources by a society mired in consumerism, immediate gratification and the cash-nexus. When all is said and done the main culprit turns out to be the usual suspect: none other than capitalism itself.

As such, *Dogmatic Wisdom* falls squarely in line with the best tradition of Marxist analysis, and ends up faring no better. The focus is on the popular rather than the elite dimension, economics rather than ideology, history rather than the facticity of the given. The price it pays is that it ends up recycling all the defects of that tradition. Thus, while the logic of capitalism helps understand many social pathologies, it cannot satisfactorily explain the collapse of American education. A *constant* cause cannot explain a *particular* effect. Since the ratification of the Constitution, American education has gone through a long series of crises, but by no means always for the same reasons. Thus, the educational panic of the late 1950s, in the wake of the Soviet Union's succesful launching of Sputnik, had little to do with either today's crisis or the needs which during the latter part of the 19th century led to the establishment of land-grant universities throughout the US. The *present* crisis did not begin with the introduction of capitalism and probably would not end if and when capitalism is abolished. What is wrong with education *now* cannot be explained away by allusions to an economic system that has existed in the US since well

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before the creation of the country, or a trend — consumerism — which dates back to the "roaring '20s (*allusions*, since Jacoby nowhere indicates precisely how capitalism undermines education, other than by recourse to allegedly shared assumptions about its nefarious consequence). *Particular* crises call for historically *specific* explanations. Instead, Jacoby takes the easy way out and recycles standard Marxist theodicy. As a result, despite a brilliant style, innumerable insights and an unequalled ability to demystify intellectual frauds, *Dogmatic Wisdom* fizzles out with a dogmatic evasion.

Any systematic analysis of the *present* demise of liberal education will reveal that it dates back, at most, to the 1960s, when the massive expansion of educational institutions under federal auspices (which is not to say that earlier American liberal education was generally either any better or much more than an apologetic exercise in the legitimation and celebration of the *status quo* by people who at that time could have been accurately described as "traditional" intellectuals). At any rate, even if the present crisis did have transcendental roots in the very nature of capitalism, it is not immediately clear why the latter, no longer challenged by any seemingly meaningful alternative, could not thrive in an ideal healthy society of autonomous individuals and well-functioning communities. In a post-Gulag world it makes no sense any more — if it ever did independently of secularized Christian eschatology — to assume that social health has to correspond to the "neutrally" administered communist society of Marxist folklore. Thus, it is no longer clear why capitalism *requires* a disintegrated society and a shallow consumerist culture — at least to the point of being *causally* connected with it. It no longer needs to sponsor or acquiesce to the current social disintegration: overcoming it would not threaten capitalism in any significant way. After all, as long as there is a sufficiently large demand, there could be plenty of money to be made by marketing Beethoven as well as rap music, or by encouraging serious study in math, the hard sciences or the classics, instead of cretinizing students with courses in vacuous, highly politicized, victimological disciplines such as Women and Gender Studies, Black Studies or Cultural Studies (which raises the question as to what the rest of the humanities must be dealing with, if it suddenly becomes necessary to invent a *particular* discipline devoted exclusively to culture).

Worse yet, this evasion tends to turn into an unintended apology. Since in the post-communist world of fading social democracies and rapidly privatizing welfare states there are no longer even imaginary alternatives to capitalism, if the present crisis is merely a capitalist epiphenomenon, then one must conclude that it is permanent. But is it really necessary to overthrow capitalism before anything can be done about education? Would bigger budgets really solve the "real" (as opposed to "diversionary") problems afflicting American education? As Jacoby's own account shows convincingly, even (or, better, most of all) the best funded American universities have tended to develop into dens of collective self-congratulatory idiocy; the use of drugs is by no means limited to the poorer school districts; and the paradigmatic capitalist obsession with the

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cash-nexus is hardly a pathology of only those of lesser means. All of which suggests that Jacoby's implied solution of shelling out bigger bucks — the bureaucrats' and administrators' standard solution to all problems — while helpful (especially for the personal cash flows of educational bureaucrats, administrators and faculty), may not be the full answer.

Of course, everything else being equal, the market tends to encourage all the disintegrating consequences Jacoby chronicles and more. But this is possible only in a situation in which the demand driving the market remains manipulable and the consumers generating this demand are not autonomous individuals with well defined and fully understood needs, *independently* of whatever the culture industry happens to advertise as the norm. In other words, cultural disintegration is logically *prior* to that manipulation of consciousness Jacoby rightly ascribes to the market. What he fails to address, but which is presupposed by his analysis, are the cultural and political processes which precipitated the social disintegration necessary for the functioning of the culture industry, consumerism and unlimited capitalist growth. That homogenization presupposed by industrial mass production and distribution (which in the former communist countries had to be forcibly imposed by a dictatorship over needs[2]) was achieved in the US primarily through the cultural and political processes associated with the successful Americanization of succeeding generations of immigrants. It was part of that broader nation-building project originally undertaken immediately after ratification of the Constitution to combat foreign powers such as England and to develop infrastructures such as an interstate road system or a central bank, which gradually subverted the original communitarian and particularistic concerns that led to the establishment of a federation rather than a unitary nation. While Hamilton, Madison and Jay can be easily seen as early agents of capitalist rationalization (opposed to Jefferson, Ethan Allen etc., advocating a rather different rural democracy), and while liberalism can be interpreted as the other side of the capitalist coin, the nation-building process that culminated in the Civil War, the New Deal and the Great Society was primarily a *political* project which cannot be reduced exclusively to its economistic component.

The present crisis in higher education is incomprehensible independently of the massive post-1960s government intervention. *Dogmatic Wisdom* says nothing about politics in general and the government's role in particular. There is not a single word about the most disruptive state measure imposed from above during the last three decades as a result of a strict interpretation of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which has practically destroyed any remaining meritocratic system in higher education: affirmative action. As for multiculturalism, *Dogmatic Wisdom* absolves the government once asgain, even though Jacoby cites an example where one of his student who ultimately managed to land an

2. See Ferenc Feher, "The Dictatorship over Needs," in *Telos* 35 (Spring 1978), pp. 31-42.

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academic job only by hyphenating his surname by tacking on that of his "ethnic" mother so that he could market himself as a certified minority. It is impossible to blame cases such as this (no longer the exception but now almost part of standard practice[3]) on capitalism or to explain them away in terms of moral failings or economic inevitability. The *de facto* quota system enforced by specifically designated affirmative action bureaucracies in practically every large university cannot be seen merely as remedial justice or part of the welfare state's normal redistributive practices. It is part of a broader political mandate emanating from a particular liberal vision hypostatizing equality above and beyond freedom and justice. Similarly, it is ultimately irrelevant whether its impact is more or less devastating than, e.g., McCarthyism. It is an intolerable aberration rather than an ideological diversion and it has destroyed whatever credibility remained in American universities as institutions predicated on rationality, persuasion and excellence. In summarily dismissing all this, *Dogmatic Wisdom* slides into a conformist apology for the academic *status quo*. By focusing exclusively on an ineliminable capitalism as the *fons et origo malorum* of the crisis in education, it ends up as a distraction and a diversion. It is no longer permissible to recycle standard Marxist accounts reducing social disintegration to the logic of capitalism — accounts assumed to be immediately obvious, but whose logic no longer applies under current historical conditions.

The Aporias of Economistic Analyses

Even the most recalcitrant capitalist apologist would readily grant that it encourages the reduction of education to training, instrumentalizes all it can to maximize profits and tends to ghettoize values into socially inconsequential private domains. In the best Marxist tradition, however, the generalized nihilism and disintegration Jacoby identifies as the consequence of capitalism was assumed to come about only *indirectly*, as a result of the socio-psychological consequences of the productivist logic of such a system. Clearly, in an ideal

3. Everyone knows of scores of such instances. Anectodes of this type have become a standard part of any discussion concerning hiring in universities. In a particularly well-known case in UCLA over a decade ago, a brilliant young academic with an impressive teaching and publication record any full professor would envy was passed over in favor of a female graduate student still writing her dissertation with no publication record and nothing particularly in her favor other than the fact that she was a woman and the hiring committee wanted a woman. The young woman was hired, even though she could not take the job for at least another year. Her male counterpart went on to become a major critic and an internationally known writer translated in all major foreign languages. Yet he never managed to find a regular academic job in any American universities. His name: Russell Jacoby. Notwithstanding all this, even at the time of the incident he interpreted events primarily in terms of academic corruption, nepotism and the Left's moral collapse. Surprisingly, his account of what happened made no mention either of affirmative action or of the devastating impact of feminism in academia. See Bernie Fels, "The Academy and its Discontents," in *Telos* 40 (Summer 1979), pp. 173-178.

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society of autonomous individuals living in well-functioning, self-governing communities it would not be profitable to sell drugs no one would buy, market useless products by appealing to deep-seated sexual pathologies that no longer exist, or abuse an environment for which everyone cares. Lenin's once shocking statement that the capitalist will gladly sell (at a profit) the rope with which his critics plan to hang him has long since become a commonplace. Consequently, if capitalism happens to thrive on manufacturing and selling junk, it may be that either buyers actually desire those commodities, or they can be manipulated into believing that, contrary to what they would otherwise normally do, they could not live well without such junk.

Marxism never bought the first explanation, since it would have had the kind of problematic consequences envisioned by Hobbes and, during Marx's own lifetime, Donoso Cortès — the need for a strong central government to regulate a social predicament defined by the infamous *homo homini lupus* permanently threatening a *bellum omnium contra omnes*.

Lukács' theory of reification explained, the second option and the early Frankfurt School's analysis of the origins of authoritarianism described the socio-psychological dynamics of how this reification actually came about. Brilliant as they might have been, these analyses have become obsolete for the very reasons Marxists usually adduce: drastic changes in the capitalist mode of production. To the extent that Jacoby remains mired in these analyses he ends up missing most of what is significant in the current academic turmoil and dismisses the current cultural wars far too quickly. He still assumes that capitalism thrives on and encourages the production and reproduction of the kind of stunted subjectivity (the infamous "authoritarian personality") malleable enough to be manipulated into accepting and supporting a fundamentally dysfunctional society, thus sharing responsibility foir precipitating the educational crisis as well as immensely more disastrous 20th century pathologies such as fascism and Nazism. But the kind of capitalism that allegedly generated the "authoritarian personality" — one of the most useless and dogmatic concepts ever to come out of Critical Theory[4] — is no longer predominant. In fact, the present educational system and the labor force it fails to prepare for viable employment (or, as Marxists say, exploitation) is becoming increasingly dysfunctional for a post-industrial capitalism whose greatly expanded capabilities allow it to satisfy *any* needs, without having to psychologically coerce consumers into desiring only those products it can profitably manufacture, as long as needs continue multiplying indefinitely.

As one of the Frankfurt School studies on the changing character of the modern family showed over 60 years ago (despite irrelevant psychoanalytic encrustations which add nothing and occasionally sidetrack the analysis), capitalism subverted the ideals of bourgeois society by undermining its ideological

4. For a systematic critique of this conformist concept, see Christopher Lasch, *The True and only Heaven: Progress and its Critics* (New York: Norton, 1991), pp. 445ff.

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cornerstone, autonomous individuality, through the regimentation imposed by the authoritarian, profit-driven, productivist logic of the factory. A worker reduced to the level of a robot in an assembly line for the best part of the day could not be at the same time a responsible citizen and a rational head of his household at all other times. This tendential undermining of the authority of the father figure eventually resulted in a society in which a substantial number of its members developed a stunted individuality. Having never achieved full maturity, sons and daughters growing up in an industrial society longed for the missing father figure which could be and historically was provided by the authoritarian state (in the cases of Nazism, fascism and Stalinism) and by the welfare state (in the so-called liberal democracies). The subsequent unfolding of this logic reduces all of society to the equivalent of a factory and, *ipso facto*, phases out any lingering liberal education, now deemed superfluous, in favor of purely instrumental training related to the performance of particular tasks.

Clearly, what the Frankfurt School saw on the horizon in 1936 was not a proletarian revolution but fascism and WWII. After the destruction of fascism in the battlefield and the containment of communism with the Cold War, capitalism began to change. Confronted with declining productivity, growing waste and potential stagnation, it managed to learn from its critics and began to decentralize, beginning with, e.g., the famous "Whiz Kids" successful reconstruction of the Ford Motor Co., and eventually, some forty years later, with cybernation and the sudden involution of industrial giants such as IBM, to federalize itself. Bottom line: the robotized worker of the Taylorized factory went the way of smokestack industries, to be gradually replaced by what resembles Gianfranco Miglio's "collaborator," i.e., an integral part of an organic productive team, modelled along the lines of the old bourgeois individual, able to make autonomous decisions and therefore immensely more functional within an increasingly complex production system impossible to micromanage from the front office.[5] Consequently, the workers of classical Marxist theory are now becoming extinct, whose few remaining specimen can be found only within the ruins of the various rapidly corroding industrial rustbelts (or in the still functioning archaic and money-losing megafactories of Eastern Europe, the former Soviet Union and parts of the still mostly pre-industrial Third World).

While most Left critiques of capitalism never acknowledged these new realities and still subscribe to modified versions of standard Marxist myths such as the infamous "theory of the crash" concerning the inevitability of the collapse of capitalism as a result of increasingly severe cyclic crises and/or growing revolutionary movements, the Frankfurt School learned its lesson. The theory of reification concerning the inevitable development of the subject-object identity turned out to be only partly right: the socio-psychological impact of capitalism

5. See Marcello Stagliano, ed., Gianfranco Miglio, *Una Costituzione per i Prossimi Trent'Anni: Intervista sulla Terza Repubblica* (Bari: Laterza, 1990), pp. 107-138.

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incapacitated workers as potential revolutionary agents but did not turn them into any kind of mystical subject-object identity. This meant that revolution could come about neither by standard insurrectional means (à la Lenin or Che Guevara), nor as a result of the normal unfolding of the logic of the capitalist system, since as Hilferding and the Austro-Marxists had convincingly argued over a generation earlier, without any substantial political opposition the system could always find solutions to economic crises. Whereas the orthodox Left remained obsessed with world revolution and labor politics, the Franfurt School grudgingly acknowledged the new state of affairs and spent the next three decades desperately searching for possible alternatives. The irony is that, although both Adorno and Marcuse remained *de facto* the prophets of gloom and doom theorizing the permanence and stability of the one-dimensional or totally administered society, they became the idols of the 1960s counterculture for their wild speculations about the liberating potentials of "genetic" socialism, polymorphous perversion and Schoenberg's music.

In today's advanced capitalism, robots, computers and automated processes are rapidly displacing the Chester A. Rileys of the 1950s (now mothballed into the various government-financed programs retraining them for non-existent jobs and meant primarily to keep them off official unemployment statistics). The prosperous worker of the 21st century must be skilled, resourceful and willing to take risks — something not altogether different from the much maligned and allegedly obsolete small entrepreneur of American folklore or the autonomous producers of turn-of-the-century syndacalist ideology. At the same time, the universalization of capitalism has resulted in a micrological evolution whereby small is not only more beautiful but also more productive, less wasteful, cost-effective (and therefore more profitable and accountable), as well as more externally regulated by governmental bureaucracies, macromanaged by distant financial centers and subject to disruptive technological shifts. The brilliant Marxist studies by, e.g., Harry Braverman, William Leiss or Stuart and Elizabeth Ewen, concerning the deskilling and Americanization (read: homogenization and cretinization) of workers remain accurate descriptions of what had been happening since the introduction of Fordism.[6] Yet they were written in the 1970s, a time when it was not yet immediately obvious that these processes were already well on the way to being phased out by the new post-Fordist capitalism. ith respect to the latter, there is no longer any convergence of interests between the objective needs of today's capitalism and the production of barely literate, docile, homogeneous workers hooked on Hollywood, Coca-Cola, sports and whatever else the culture industry happens to be

6. See Harry Braverman, *Labor and Monopoly Capital: The Degradation of Work in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1974); Stuart and Elizabeth Ewen, *Captains of Consciousness: Advertisement and the Social Roots of Consumer Culture* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1976); and William Leiss, *The Limits to Satisfaction: An Essay on the Problem of Needs and Commodities* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1976).

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marketing at the time. There is as much, if not more money to be made selling healthy food, sturdy clothing or classical music to highly educated individuals as in hocking cultural schlock. Post-Fordist capitalism does not need the Beavis and Buttheads produced by the present educational system either as obedient producers or as manipulable consumers. It needs, rather, autonomous individuals willing and able to function within its increasingly complex networks. It is as compatible with first rate pedagogical institutions as with those primarily concerned with AIDS education, the distribution of condoms or teaching gay studies. Capitalism certainly contributed to the cultural disintegration *Dogmatic Wisdom* describes, but is no longer necessarily benefiting from it nor is it inextricably bound with it.

Occluding the Government's Role

Dogmatic Wisdom calls for a shift in focus in evaluations of the present state of higher education from the elite universities entrusted with educating the privileged few to the state universities and community colleges attended by the overwhelming majority of students. In wading through this pedagogical foggy-bottom, rarely mentioned in literature dealing with the current "crisis of education," Jacoby does an excellent job describing the deterioration of liberal education to mere training as a result of market pressures and the ever-present obsession with consumerism. The cult of the useful — the obsession with skills readily redeemable in the new labor market — obliterates the ideal of educating autonomous individuals and responsible citizens. In addition to the same old class differences typical of every capitalist society, which readily translate into a growing rather than diminishing institutional stratification spanning from designer elite universities to Wal-Mart community colleges, Jacoby sees a deadening homogeneity at all levels. Everywhere consumerism reigns supreme. Postmodernity, post-Fordism and the information revolution have apparently had no significant impact on social inequality which, if anything, is greater now than in the past. This is why he sees the culture wars as merely rhetorical smokescreens concealing fundamental inequalities no one cares to even think about any more.

To the extent that *Dogmatic Wisdom* hardly mentions politics, it itself remains open to the charge of merely providing yet another diversion and distraction from the real problems. Today the logic of constantly expanding needs presupposed by consumerism can no longer be blamed exclusively on greedy capitalists and their obsession with the bottom line. The fractured consciousness unable to relate needs and satisfaction (so that the consciousness industry, primarily through advertising, can falsify the relation and substitute whatever commodities it seeks to sell for what would actually provide satisfaction) cannot be seen solely as the result of the kind of reification generated by the capitalist mode of production separating thinking and doing. Had such been the case, consumerism and the infinite multiplication of needs fueling it would have ended with the advent of post-Fordism, i.e, with the elimination in

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advanced capitalism of the sharp distinction between thinking and doing. As a purely economistic dialectic, Lukács' projection of the overcoming of reification through the inevitable development of the subject-object identity (as a result of the conclusion of the process of reduction of the proletariat, the collective object, into a class-conscious revolutionary subject) even if it were at all possible, did not deal directly with the liberal (or "bourgeois") separation of morality and politics other than by assuming the automatic obliteration of all cultural particularity within an all encompassing communist society. From the very beginning even the most theoretically sophisticated version of the proposed Marxist cure for capitalist reification was immensely worse that the disease. It prefigured a mystical subsumption of all individuality and particularity within a metaphysical collective consciousness whose mundane embodiment turned out to be a bureaucracy more perverse than the capitalist class it sought to replace. Unfortunately, because of a convergence of interests between radical intellectuals and the rising New Class needed to manage the projected bureaucratic apparatus, during the last century the Left has chosen to follow this catastrophic Marxist path rather than, e.g., anarchist, populist and federalist alternatives prefigured not only in the work of the late Proudhon, but in the original 18th century American project of a federation concerned primarily with safeguarding the autonomy of particular communities and not simply abstract individual freedoms.

The inability of a fragmented consciousness to connect needs and satisfaction paves the way for the culture industry's successful substitution of an endless number of useless commodities falsely promising a fulfillment which, unattained, leaves the consumer ready to be lured by the next commodity, *ad infinitum*. But the constitution of this fragmented consciousness is only partly a result of the division of labor, the separation of thinking and doing, etc. It has to do first and foremost with the *prior* collapse of any coherent community in relation to which individual consciousness can overcome its abstract status and totalize its outlook in such a way as to be able to rely on traditions and customs to successfully connect needs and satisfaction, thus remaining beyond the lure of the culture industry. To the extent that in, e.g., the folklore of most premodern cultures, the stubborn peasant easily fooled by the complexity of modernity has to be *fooled*, i.e., unlike his sophisticated urban counterpart for whom consumerism is second nature, he has to be led to behave contrary to his nature, presupposes that he is not yet alienated, and therefore endowed with a *Weltanschauung* resistant to the seduction of commodity fetishism. In other words, the modern cancer of consumerism can spread its malignant growth only if communities and the traditional consciousness rooted in them have already been obliterated.

Beyond the Adornian Impasse

None of this is exactly news, nor does it suggest, much to the chagrin of residual "progressives," a mechanical return to a premodern condition. Rather,

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it points to a *reversible process* of community disintegration rather than bemoaning an ineliminable commercialism as the key to contemporary dilemmas. Instead of evoking resignation (as *Dogmatic Wisdom* ultimately must, after its readers realize that neither capitalism nor consumerism are likely to disappear anytime soon), it suggests possible strategies and alternative scenarios. Most of all, it refocuses attention on the role of government, both as one of the causes of community disintegration and as the main culprit in the present educational crisis. The unfolding of liberalism during the past couple of centuries and the systematic displacement by a unitary nation of a federalism which, no matter how flawed it may have been from its very inception, was predicated on the protection of the particularity and otherness of local communities, have contributed to the disintegration of community and consciousness at least as much as has capitalism. Today the role of the federal government in enforcing homogeneity and conformity within the education industry is immensely more pervasive and pernicious than anything advocated by multiculturalists, pc advocates, feminists and other agents of collective cretinization.

The history of capitalism and liberalism has been interpreted far too much along economic lines, even when the autonomy of politics is grudgingly acknowledged. The process of nation-building has been at least as important as commodity fetishism in contributing to social disintegration and the homogenization of consciousness. The figure of the intellectual/bureaucrat/professional is as guilty as the capitalist in fostering a mass society of disempowered individuals whose lack of organic ties to functioning communities able to provide identity, values and meaning, renders them increasingly powerless and susceptible to the new logic of domination — a domination imposed as the other side of the formal-rational solution of otherwise seemingly insoluble social problems. Lawyers and the courts displace informal communitarian means of conflict resolution, therapists substitute for face-to-face interaction in generating personal awareness, and the culture industry takes the place of tradition in the brave new world of modernity. In the past century the main role of Marxism has been to demonstrate the inevitability and irreversibility of this process by tying it to an economistic logic successfully secularizing the Christian unilinear theory of history. Benjamin's rejection of this perverted eschatology and Adorno's vindication of particularity and *mimesis* are ritually acknowledged by latter-day "critical theorists" who, however, immediately revert to a more comfortable economism reducing the whole tradition to either a Marxist deviation or another version of liberal ideology.

Its sophistication and elegance notwithstanding, *Dogmatic Wisdom* does not avoid this conformist fate. In explicitly calling for more generous funding of public education and implicitly suggesting the need for moral austerity as an antidote to commercialism, it remains blissfully unconcerned with the growing inadequacy of liberalism, bureaucratic centralism and New Class managerialism.[7]

7. Cf. Paul Piccone, "The Crisis of Liberalism and the Emergence of Federal Populism," in *Telos* 89 (Fall 1991), pp. 7-44.

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As ideology, the culture wars do "divert education and distract America" but, along with every other ideology, they also conceal and distort a kernel of truth not reducible to a crude economistic metaphysics. The kernel of truth Jacoby misses is the growing identity crisis which capitalism and liberalism cannot solve. Consumerism cannot satisfy needs and depoliticized individualism cannot provide meaning. The various civil wars and ethnic cleansings taking place in the Third World and the ruins of the former Soviet empire are only more extreme versions of the same identity crisis which so far in the West has only generated cultural wars and inter-burcaucratic struggles concerning the proper allocation of academic pork. The old dialectic of base and superstructure never went anywhere even in the best of Marxisms: after reducing all culture to epiphenomena of a mystical economic logic, it could only persuade those who had never moved beyond a secularized Christian theory of history guaranteeing salvation at the end of the journey. Even when buried under a skillful presentation, an elegant style and a mountain of sensible insights, it still occasionally lapses into mystification and obfuscation.

A radical approach to these quandaries must go beyond attacking for the nth time the windmills of consumerism, commercialism and capitalism to prefiguring possible ways of reconstituting communities and individuality, not as "a return to the past" but as a concrete alternative to mass society and its complements: the culture industry, hyperprofessionalism, commercialism and New Class domination. In terms of education, this means questioning the virtues of public education in a context in which it is no longer either desirable or possible to inculcate a national consciousness (one of the main original objective of the deployment of the system of universal education), as well as government involvement in higher education, and the continued displacement of the family and the community as key pedagogical institutions by formal education. The state's administration of these areas is not less expensive, more efficient or more equitable. A radical critique of education today must be first and foremost *political* in nature. This, however, does not imply that the kind of critique Jacoby provides of the diversions presently substituting for meaningful debates is not extremely useful. It only means that it is not enough.

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The Leisure of the Theory Class: Political Correctness or Professional Correctness?

Tim Luke

As in *The Last Intellectuals*, in *Dogmatic Wisdom* Russell Jacoby provides a powerful critique of the deteriorating state of American intellectual life. Although he is usually on the mark, he still falls into the same trap as the neoconservatives he criticizes in paying far too much attention to "elite colleges" or the "best universities." For the most part, he follows Bloom, Sykes, Kimball and D'Souza in their choice of the best private schools and top public state universities: Berkeley, Stanford, Howard, Michigan, Duke and Harvard. There is no reason to accept Bloom's self-serving but mistaken claim that only students from the nation's finest schools "have the greatest moral and intellectual effect on the nation." This approach only reaffirms the corrupt but widely accepted symbolic economy of academic "big-names," where big-name universities hire big-name professors to attract big-bank account student families, outside donors and granting agencies to send their children, donations and grants to cover the big-salaries of big-name faculty and administrators, while transmitting the big-name degree credentials, institutional honor and knowledge products that relegitimate everyone's big-names and/or big-bank accounts. Outside these orbits, however, there are the 80% or 90% of college students Bloom dismisses as having "their own needs" and perhaps "very different characters" than those he deigns to discuss. Since these "very different characters" are the students most teachers deal with everyday, the following observations will focus on how dogmatic wisdom in American higher education works in the foggy bottom of academia. Jacoby makes a good showing, but he cannot cover every part of the scholastic waterfront with the same depth and detail. Most importantly, what needs to be discussed is what he calls the practice of "a blaring mercantilism that leaves a liberal education pinched and gasping" (28). This mercantilism is part of a peculiar professional economy of excess and denial, lying at the heart of American higher education. This economy manifests itself in "PC battles," but "PC" here is not "political correctness"; it is "professional correctness."

In today's university research is identified with promoting economic growth and scientific development. All too often, however, very little of what is mostly "normal science" in all the disciplines really has this impact. Some of it may be used in teaching students about the world or their disciplines, but much of it is

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too specialized. Only a minute fraction of it may actually be sellable in the open markets. Still, an overwhelming amount of research which does not find use-value in teaching or exchange-value in external markets continues to be produced. This is because there are special symbolic economies within disciplines, departments and universities at large that produce and consume research to sustain internal command economies of disciplinary repute, professional prestige and administrative allocation. These things are produced not for use as such but for use as signs. The research game is a game of researchers, by researchers and for researchers. In a way, it becomes "free from work," "effort freely chosen and expended" or "unhurried activity" — it becomes "leisure" of, for and by the theory classes. This does not mean that everything is play. Real jobs, money and careers are based on this sort of labor. Still, to outsiders academic work appears to be a leisure industry with workers moving at a leisurely pace.

This academic economy of invidious distinction combines two disparate and allegedly antithetical logics — the academic/scholarly and the capitalist/professional into an elaborate system of knowledge production and producer valorization. As the university becomes increasingly implicated in the reproduction of the larger national and transnational economy, its workers are expected to transform it into an informational engine of economic growth and a reserve bank of accumulated conceptual capital. Thus criteria borrowed from the real worlds of exchange-value are now imposed on both the use-value producing regions of teaching and the sign-value generating realms of research. The results are both destructive and frightening in their implications.

Research outputs in this symbolic economy operate as commodities in a complex system of private, departmental and institutional accounting. They are produced, consumed, traded, priced and accumulated according to strange systems of value accounting. Having crafted their products following their disciplinary standards of "good research" or "normal science," academics try to circulate them in multiple exchanges of compensation, reputation and status. These mutual funds of repute, in turn, sustain the leisure of the theory classes.

On an individual level, the placement of articles and books become the book on one's career or the articles of placement of one's labor in departments, between different universities or within the discipline itself. Without any criteria for evaluation, location measures worth. Scarce positional goods, or those in the pages of high prestige journals or between the covers of big-name presses, mark high or low value as a function of the relative difficulty of gaining access to them. In these networks of production "where" one publishes is accepted as a definition of "worth." This is essential, because "where" one's work is done also defines "how" rewards are allocated, "when" promotions occur, "why" status rises, "who" wins. Of course, "how much" also can determine "worth" within economies that accept "high volume" in lieu of "high visibility" output, but often only up to some point of saturation. At that juncture, "too much" often backfires as badly as "poor placement."

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The credo of "professional correctness" drives or stalls careers. In this PC code, every scholar is expected to become a professionally correct producer, mixing "good placement" with "steady volume" in marketing research products to outlets with the highest material pay-off, disciplinary recognition or professional interest. Publication itself becomes significant by occupying scarce locations (limited journal pages), claiming rare options (limited book publishing contracts) or passing tough review committees (limited grant funds). In this PC code, every department becomes an open mutual fund of symbolic values, pooled together as the summation of the faculty's local university and national disciplinary sign value productivity. The department can tout its mutual fund's one year, five year, ten year record of yield in the quest for more raises, new faculty, additional promotions, fresh students and greater material support. Universities and disciplines, in turn, track their various cases of success and growth in this complex symbolic economy of pooled assets, joint stock companies or mutual funds at the individual, departmental, college and discipline level of aggregation.

This is a highly destructive form of blaring mercantilism. Professional correctness corrupts the pursuit of liberal education. Transmitting knowledge to the next generation of students pales beside creating the next generation of statistical applications certain to win fresh citations in major journals. Challenging the classics falls to the wayside, in favor of publishing classic challenges to disciplinary outlaws intent on destroying the integrity of the profession's scientific enterprise. Writing the great book about enduring moral dilemmas is ignored in favor of building on one's career in the reputational trading pits at national meetings where, as Jacoby jokingly suggests, scholars swap puts and calls on individual scholars' career futures. As *U.S. News and World Report* annually identifies "up and coming universities," as gossips gauge the relative merits of the "emerging star," the "has been" or the "never was" at national association confabs, or as college deans target departments for "new hires" or "more cutbacks," symbolic markets work their magic. The codes of professional correctness sustain a level of conformity, self-service and corruption that D'Souza's nightmare of political correctness does not even approach. More importantly, as normal science produces normalized scientists and normalizing disciplines in the research game, it also produces suboptimal college educations and substandard classroom performance by researchers struggling to hit the big-time in the casino capitalism of collegiate careerism.

It is within these disciplinary dynamics that the real professional correctness struggle rages incessantly. The stakes in winning or losing are immensely higher than in "political correctness." In American education, power and prestige are organized around being "professionally correct," while the campaigns enforcing "politically correct" behavior are a minor diversion. When all is said and done, Latino studies stars and stand-out feminist scholars all play the same professionally correct games, even within their politically correct discussions, at raise time and in the bars during their "professional meetings." The substance

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of the discipline is immaterial. Disciplinarity itself has become the key. Whether it is astrophysics or African studies, professional correctness uses this standard to discipline individual behavior by locating scholarly work in vague regions of "approval" (the mainstream, at the core, on the cutting edge) and/or "disapproval" (the backwaters, along the periphery, on the dull side). Similarly, one's methodological stance in research practices is fitted into categories of legitimacy (sophisticated, leading edge, standard-setting) and/or illegitimacy (unsophisticated, old hat, completely lacking). In the same way, publication records can be graded in terms of "significance" (major journals, big-name presses, high citation counts) and/or "insignificance" (minor journals, no-name presses, no citation counts). At the end of the day, most academics in research-oriented colleges must cope with this sort of professional correctness. Who gets what, where, when and why in university departments, professional associations and grant competitions depends on these systems of invidious distinction. While the intrinsic worth of any widely sought rewards — pay raises, tenure, promotion, corner offices or administrative powers — is declining, the battle for them continues. Strategies for winning have to do with "professional" rather than "political" correctness.

Living in perpetual anxiety about the significance of their work, when its meaninglessness can be gauged by the vacant stares of fifty twenty-year olds all wearing their baseball caps backwards in class, university faculty compulsively rank themselves, their departments or universities in lists of prestige and repute. Everyone dismisses lists as philistine, but they do generate meaning. In them the dark tales of faculty self-affirmation create and transfer professional notions of worth. Everyone knows these stories: "Sure, nobody gives a damn about my latest book, but I am at Johns Hopkins and not out in the boondocks." Or: "Allright, everyone slept through my Wednesday lecture, but I teach in the highest nationally-ranked department of sociology, not some second-rate shop at a third-rate school." Or: "Fine, the number of majors in history is dropping, but I have three articles in *The American Historical Review* and none in the *South Dakota Historical Society Bulletin*." Or: "Big deal, your colleague just placed a manuscript with Iowa State University Press, but I have two books with Yale University Press and not a bad review anywhere on any of them." Outside the fishbowls of academe, such psychosocial alibis seem trivial. But, on campus, they provide psychic meaning, professional purpose and personal drive to many miserable lives racked with alienation and ambiguity. The bottom line is that no one can judge if one's work is good or bad, important or unimportant, revolutionary or ordinary, but it is possible to establish through codes of locational value that Oxford University Press is better than University of Nebraska Press, the *American Sociological Review* more important than *The Insurgent Sociologist*, California-Berkeley more prestigious than East Carolina State. So, like Calvinist entrepreneurs clinging to monetary wealth as signs of salvation, academics clutch their journal placements, publishing houses and department affiliations as *the* tangible markers of predestined significance

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and well-deserved success. Publishing a classic article with elegant arguments anywhere is meaningless, but publishing a robotic research report in the *American Political Science Review* is "it." Writing a great book for a commercial press is very difficult, but publishing an unsellable book with Harvard University Press proves it is great. The logo on the spine or the code on the cover is the *sine qua non* of achievement. As any real estate agent never tires of reiterating, always go for "location, location, location" to measure worth.

Yet asking whether those Oxford University Press books are really good, if *ASR* articles really add more to human understanding than *The Insurgent Sociologist*, or if Cal-Berkeley students are better educated than those at East Carolina State is rarely done. Independent assessments, as Texas savings and loans discovered in the 1980s, can burst too many bubbles. Challenges from without would crash the symbolic economies of meaning; those who benefit from them fear any *glasnost* that might disturb their benefits and those who do not benefit from them now often hope to do so in the future, so they too rarely question the prevailing regime. In point of fact, like the indecipherable party tracts from old Communist Party academies in the former Soviet Union, most high prestige academic writing is printed and circulated in professional journals that exist only because some bureaucratic body (say, the American Political Science Association, the American Economics Association, or the American Psychological Association) makes a subscription a mandatory component of paying annual professional dues. Individuals may read the book reviews (to check the reputation markets) or skim the table of contents (to monitor the prestige placement exchange), but most articles go unread, uncited and unremembered, like the collected works of Joseph Stalin or Enver Hoxha, as volume after volume are entombed in forgotten library stacks or dusty bottom shelves in faculty offices.

Because these symbolic economies are what give value to the academic process of production and drive faculty behavior in the workplace, liberal education is left pinched and gasping. The production of *American Sociological Review* or *American Political Science Review* articles not only does not add to humanity's store of knowledge, it actually detracts from the processes: the time and energy expended on writing articles no one wants to read (has there ever been one *APSR* or *ASR* article that changed the world or affected anyone's life?) or journals no one will buy (can the *APSR* or *ASR* be found in the magazine section of Walden Books?) cannot be spent writing useful materials, teaching important ideas or tending to real intellectual challenges. In the final analysis, this system of academic production becomes a perverse system of ab-use value that prevents change as it ruins individual lives and educational institutions.

The leisure of the theory class is not tied to the trumped-up games of political correctness attacked by Bloom, D'Souza, Sykes or Kimball. Instead, it is based on these elaborate symbolic economies of reward and punishment that disconnect individual scholarship from obligations of teaching, national academic disciplines from individual universities and professional success from the

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rewards of professing. The work of academics or of the theory class becomes locked into these insidious economies of invidious distinction that disciplinary associations, university administrations and professional entrepreneurs all manipulate to advance their interests without necessarily or even occasionally serving the more nebulous but far more important interests of society, students or scholarship.

The professionalization of most academic disciplines introduces a debilitating influence in the life of many individual faculty, college departments and entire universities. As Jacoby suggests in the last chapter of *Dogmatic Wisdom*, bizarre intradisciplinary practices in each department — not the profession of teaching or the life of scholarship — define what has value. Thus the latest fads of disciplinary debate constitute what is and should be taught, the major journals of disciplinary associations become the prime targets of academic research and writing and national recognition in the discipline (meaning other faculty at other schools in the same area of research) outweighs honest work at the craft of teaching (meaning working with students). Most serious systems of ranking are done by research reputation in disciplines, not by academic strength of graduates or overall satisfaction of students; everyone knows that focusing on teaching will materially diminish one's real professional status. So teaching tends to slide along without any concern for real intellectual coherence in the local curriculum, which becomes little more than a register of "courses taught." Any lingering residues of pedagogical correctness, in which universities are seen as places for serious students to learn enduring truths from dedicated professors, simply get lost in this shuffle.

Given this dismal state of affairs, Jacoby's sometimes pessimistic review of political correctness in American universities actually sounds optimistic. On one level, the PC wars or the battles over establishing some code of "political correctness" have occasionally flared, like many others, along the lines of race, class and gender. Yet, these skirmishes crop up as sideshows of other struggles in distant theaters of conflict. They are copycat conflicts, contagion effects or conference leavings, which flash to attention after intense television coverage of some incident elsewhere, extensive outbreaks of ideological crises across the nation, or hyped-up locals return from a national meeting filled with the fires of outrage.

Otherwise, this sort of political correctness is simply eclipsed, on another level, by another form of *Kulturkampf*, which surfaces in the constant campaigns to induce the latest fad reigning in the business or engineering school. Rather than political correctness, these mobilizations for a kind of "corporate correctness" have introduced, over the past decade allegedly so racked with left-wing political correctness, rhetorics of "downsizing," "globalization," "mission statements," "corporate culture change," "service outreach" and, most recently, "total quality management." Instead of transforming students into leftist automatons à la political correctness, corporate correctness asks faculty to see students as "customers" seeking satisfaction in "high-quality

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service," "measurable value-added" and "assessable educational outcomes." Universities are becoming less ideological enactments of race/gender/class outsider revolutions than experimental simulations of new organizational theories from the business school. To succeed on this long revolutionary march, departments spend untold hours in drafting planning documents to rationalize service delivery, formulating mission statements, identifying customer wants and rerationalizing service delivery. As a result, the faculty spends less time teaching students, advising majors or even most problematically for many, "doing research."

From centralizing visual identity (redoing university letterheads or building signs), to streamlining a core curriculum (cutting requirements or lowering credits needed for graduation), envisioning global outreach (selling teaching services to grad students from Germany or goat-herders in Mali) to focusing on strengths (eliminating entire departments or colleges), the 1980s and 1990s have been a time of corporate correctness. Emulate Toyota's Mr. Toyoda, not China's Chairman Mao; all power to the paying customers, not power to the radical faculty; accept corporate conformity, not embrace minority studies programs — these have been the critical watchwords. The assertion that most American universities are choking in the stranglehold of radical lesbian separatists or forty-something SDS holdouts cannot be taken seriously.

In the final analysis, the blaring mercantilism at the core of US higher education supports Jacoby's reflections on how capitalism is destroying the university. Despite his arguments to the contrary, however, patching up capitalism will not fix what ails American universities. If mercantilism is an economy, it is also a system of power. The deployment of mercantilist strategies by a New Class of intellectual producers and consumers in higher educational institutions suggests that there has been a hostile take-over. The high-jackers are not renaissance scholars, dedicated teachers or enlightened educators. Rather, they are symbolic analysts, telematic consultants and informational designers intent on transforming research universities and elite colleges into little mercantilist fiefs in the global networks of the emergent informational economy.

Teaching students, building libraries, accumulating truths are all losing propositions in this approach to higher education. So, the best and the brightest all work on ways to artfully jettison these old pedagogically correct obligations. Knowledge is power, not freedom. Information should be authority, not choice. Wisdom must be dominating, not liberating. The New Class knows this and making the university serve these mercantilist purposes is the goal behind its tactics of professionally correct advancement. Of course an odd mythologist, warming the back benches in the faculty senate, may still sing songs of ancient glories, when an ethos of pedagogical correctness bid teachers to teach, students to learn and colleges to guard humanity's timeless truths. There are still a handful of romantics, living among scores of colleagues who might otherwise have been refrigerator salesmen or assistant vice-presidents of the local bank, that vainly tout the necessity of abiding by the directives of

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pedagogical correctness. But these voices are easily drowned out by entrepreneurial exponents of political correctness and the dedicated devotees of corporate correctness.

This future, no matter how comouflaged it is by codes of professional and corporate correctness, is now. The past, however alluring it may seem in visions of political correctness, bringing moral purity or dreams of pedagogical correctness attaining serious educational results, is over. If theory is the vocation of the theory classes, then that vocation is grounded in the emergent informational economies of flexible transnational specialization seceding from old industrial economies with their rigid national diversification. Political correctness, in many respects, is a language game used by clever operators to claim a bigger piece of a rapidly shrinking pie in the sunset economies of rustbelt leviathans shackled to national economies of scale. Professional correctness, on the other hand, is the code of commerce needed to negotiate success in the symbolic analysts' zones of sunrise industries popping up in sunbelt lilliputs linked informationally to scores of other similar local economies of scope all around the world.

Jacoby's review of American higher education covers a lot of ground and uncovers much of what troubles academic life. Regrettably, he does not go all the way. He concludes that the ravages of capitalism are to blame for the decline of education, but he advances few antidotes. Strangely enough, while he sees some of the ways in which corrupt capitalist exchange affects campus life, he also fails to face the true hearts of darkness sustaining these academic economies of excess and denial. In many ways, the radical tenure of professional correctness not the political correctness of tenured radicals, has closed the American mind, because its illiberal styles of education have been taught and learned all too well by all concerned. Unless and until the analysis of higher education moves beyond the likes of Bloom, Sykes, D'Souza or Kimball, as profscams akin the theory of the leisure class, these glib hackscams will not be exposed with effective critiques on the leisure of the theory class.

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Up from McCarthyism?

Paul Gottfried

Russell Jacoby's study of American education is a welcome addition to a body of critical literature going back to Irving Babbitt and Henry Adams. Like his predecessors, Jacoby points to flaws in the way Americans educate their youth and expresses anxiety about oue deteriorating institutions of learning. The most useful critical perspective, but one Jacoby takes only intermittently, treats with equal contempt all conventional political polarities. It is a perspective which recognizes, above all, the time-boundedness of all fashionable discourse. The conservative critique of the academy, which Jacoby properly takes apart, does not go as far back as Edmund Burke and the Council of Trent, as Jacoby believes. Allan Bloom and Dinesh D'Souza are not "conservative" in any sense that would be understandable before the American conservative reorganization of the 1970s and 1980s, identified with the *Commentary* set and the neoconservatives. Today's quite qualified conservatives are not responsible for alleged conservative violations of civil liberties during the McCarthy era. Those of them who were around back then were critical of McCarthy and still define themselves as Truman-Democrats. Bloom and D'Souza repeatedly denounce racism, nationalism and cynicism about human rights. Bloom praises American resolve to spread the doctrine of human equality throughout the world and D'Souza presents Martin Luther King as the culminating figure in the development of Western moral consciousness. Both exalt the civil rights movement, at least before its open embrace of quotas, as America's greatest postwar moral crusade.

The quarrel of today's liberals with Roger Kimball, Charles Sykes and other neoconservatives critics of higher education has nothing to do with McCarthyism. It is an intramural battle between feuding sets of welfare state democrats who differ on specific policy issues but mostly on who among themselves should rule. Liberals would like to expand the list of designated victims to include gays. They also support more radical representatives of governmentally-privileged minorities than those the neoconservatives showcase. Thus the belabored neoconservative distinction between the "Christian Aristotelian" Martin Luther King and the allegedly less Western and more revolutionary Malcolm X, or between "moderate" and "radical" feminists. Such distinctions, however, are less significant than the fact that, as the nominee for Secretary of Education in 1985, William Bennett, boasted to the Senate that he hired more minority members as NEH Director than his liberal Democratic predecessor.

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At NEH Bennett and his neoconservative successor Lynne Cheney worked to increase the bloc grants going to elite universities.

Jacoby exaggerates both the extent of McCarthyite academic persecution and the limited nature of the current PC terror. For the sake of accuracy, he should have begun his account with the outrages inflicted by the House Unamerican Activities Committee and the F.B.I. before and after America's entry into the WWII. In the name of anti-fascism, academics and journalists who questioned America's intervention were subject to government harassment and, in some cases, arrest and imprisonment. Scholars such as Justus Doenecke and Robert Higgs have documented these persecutions. Most conventional leftist critics of suppressed First Amendment rights give short shrift to the early 1940s and, like Victor Navasky and Ellen Schrecker, consider the government's bullying of leftist faculty in the 1950s to be a kind of *novum*, except for the Palmer Raids of 1920. Decent people were certainly hurt professionally in the 1950s. Yet, Jacoby is as credulous in accepting the highest casualty figures for that decade as he is dismissive about the extent of academic intolerance at the present time. Outside of the University of California, there are no documented cases from the 1950s of academic dismissals occurring on strictly political grounds. It is equally hard to prove the same thing, as Jacoby indicates, for the 1980s and 1990s. Jacoby and Schrecker express outrage that the promising classicist Moses Finley had to accept a chair at Cambridge, after being investigated as a former Communist. (Who would refuse to suffer such an indignity!) Contrary to what Jacoby claims, Finley left Rutgers, not Princeton, to take up a dream position abroad — a move he would have undoubtedly made independently of McCarthy's activities.

Bloom is correct about the solidarity of faculties in the face of McCarthyism. Most university professors polled in the early 1950s disliked McCarthy and the HUAC; McCarthyite professors such as Wilmoore Kendall suffered isolation at elite universities, and even those with tenure were sometimes urged to leave. (Kendall, yielding to social pressure, had his contract bought out by Yale in the 1950's.) In the present academic climate, it is not busybody state legislators but the faculty themselves who rush to schedule sexual harassment seminars and review course proposals and syllabi on the basis of ideological litmus tests. Everyone knows of such cases. A University of Pennsylvania student, Greg Pavlik, was removed from the school newspaper and threatened with expulsion for writing about mounting violence on campus (the report was seen as a slur on black males). Enraged blacks destroyed the set of papers which carried Pavlik's article, whereupon both faculty and various student groups condemned Pavlik and expressed solidarity with the vandals who confiscated the school paper. This situation seems more frightening than McCarthyism at least with respect to universities. It is now the schools themselves that have gone crazy, as Nat Hentoff points out. The illustrations keep multiplying, even if Jacoby does not find each individual case as ominous as the crimes attributed to the McCarthy era.

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Allegedly the witch hunts of the 1950s were entirely reprehensible, while the academic madness of the 1990s is related to *real* problems, like "discrimination and inequality." The defect in this argument is that there is nothing in the current political correctness which is improving anyone's social position, except for the inquisitor generals in charge. It is also debatable whether more government programs will succeed in bringing about more equality between the sexes and races without exacting a prohibitive price in human liberty. Of course government can pretend to be removing inequality, it does this now, moreover, by throwing money at social workers and academic thinktanks, and by creating minority quotas that give middle-class, less professionally qualified minority members an advantage over their white male counterparts.

The political concerns of the McCarthy era were at least reasonable, though blown out of proportion when put into practice. As William Phillips of *Partisan Review* explained: "Some of those pursued by McCarthy were Communists and what one was being asked to do [on much of the intellectual Left] was to defend their right to lie about it." Those on the democratic Left who turned against the Communists were morally correct; Phillips, Sidney Hook, Harvey Klehr and other moderate leftists were not hallucinating when they found intellectuals in schools and elsewhere willing to defend Stalinist tyranny and protect communist agents. American universities today are not concealing neo-Nazis or any right-wing group of extremists dangerous enough to justify the imposition of speech codes and doctrinally-purified curricula. The grounds for the present academic hysteria seem far less defensible than the real, albeit exaggerated, communist dangers of the 1950s.

Jacoby's comments on multiculturalism are highly enlightening and make reading the book worthwhile. Multiculturalists, he correctly observes, are the agents of monoculturalism, seeking to replace human diversity with an homogenized, victimological and/or consumerist culture. He cites surveys taken among black and other minority students that suggest that their interests and ambitions run parallel to those of white students. They hope to make it in American society and usually have little if any interest in exploring or resurrecting, e.g., their African roots. They will bring up their minority status not out of cultural outrage but only if it proves professionally useful. Big business, as Jacoby also observes, is perpetually eager to promote multiculturalism, in order to create homogeneous world markets. Corporate support for such a project, Jacoby observes, receives little attention in neoconservative polemics against American education. Nor does the attempted application of market principles to higher education. This, as Jacoby further notes, has contributed significantly to the watering down of programs at colleges competing for limited pools of students. One question Jacoby does not consider sufficiently is why the US needs to have so much of its youth warehoused in colleges. Is there anything "undemocratic" about producing more shoemakers and barbers than unemployed college graduates? Why does the US lead the rest of the world in making a "college experience" available to the scholastically deficient? Is

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there a need for so many "liberal arts" colleges which prepare most of their students for neither gainful employment nor appreciation of the liberal arts? All these questions are definitely related to the peddling of multiculturalism as a form of sensitization that can be marketed as higher education.

Though sensitivity training finds defenders in the elite universities, multiculturalism thrives in a less scholastic form in other institutions of learning as well. At my own college the faculty and administration have introduced a new core curriculum which, it is claimed, has turned us into a "liberal arts" institution. The major features of the curriculum are instruction in writing composition and the designing of courses that present a multicultural perspective. Operative here are three things: the school's eagerness to advertise itself as a liberal arts college without making changes threatening to faculty and students; fear that the government will not provide enough funding because of a "lack of minorities"; and the hope of attracting funds from local corporate executives who are financing minority scholarships. Neither Bloom nor D'Souza explores the material circumstances leading to multicultural initiatives in many colleges. As Jacoby points out, this development has nothing to do with either deconstructionist literary critics or octogenarian Marxists. A recent interview with Kimball in connection with a biographical sketch of Jacques Derrida in the January 23, 1994 *Sunday New York Times* underlines the flight from reality that characterizes "conservative" educational commentary. All Kimball could say about the opaque literary critic Derrida is that he is destroying American education. Out of a list of 500 causes leading to the decline of American higher education, I would find it hard to fit Derrida even at the bottom. Jacoby is also correct to point out the ties between what the neoconservatives leave out of their educational criticism and their own funding sources. It is corporate wealth and government agencies, not the friends of Sartre and Marcuse, who pay for neoconservative educational foundations and books.

One final observation may be in order. Despite his usually perceptive grasp of historical trends, Jacoby misses the connection between the national crusades against Communism in the 1950's and those against insensitivity in recent years. There may be something in the American character that predisposes us to intrusive public crusades on behalf of changing, burning concerns. Contrary to the "end of ideology" argument, Americans in the second half of the century seem obsessed with noble missions that require the support of public and private institutions. Empowering minorities and fighting discrimination are only two recent extensions of defeating fascism and Communism. And all such American crusades since the Wilsonian era have been conducted in the name of "democracy," including the recently ended struggle against Communism.

In these enterprises, the American national state and its largely unaccountable agencies (wedged somewhere between the executive and legislative branches of the federal government) have played dominant roles. Jacoby may approve of the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission and its affiliated state organizations more than he does of the anti-Communist enforcement apparatus of the

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1950s, but certainly there is a historical connection between the two. And surely there is a connection between using the F.B.I. to ferret out suspected Communists and using it to investigate religious enthusiasts and anchorite racialists. The point here is not that Jacoby and I are each sensitive to different uses of political force. It is rather that both of us as scholars should see the same long-range trend, of which universities are only a part. It makes no difference whether the modern administrative state takes over institutions of higher learning as centers of military research or as laboratories for social engineering. In the American case, the result has been the same, that colleges and universities have lost their moral and financial independence, as their officials have been reduced to welfare junkies. Even colleges that wish to break the habit are not allowed to. The feds and the courts find ways of pushing back in. They cite the fact that some student or faculty member is receiving public money and that the entire school is subject to government guidelines.

Perhaps university professors have not chosen their mentors well, and perhaps big business has not done enough to raise our educational sights. Yet no comprehensive account of the problems of American education can fail to address the destructive and arbitrary interference by the managerial state. In America, that interference has been aided by a dangerous rhetorical and conceptual displacement, the redefinition of democracy from self-government to a series of crusades organized by public officials, with the unfailing support of the media. This managerial destruction of both democracy and the integrity of educational institutions is the side of contemporary history that Jacoby should explain more fully in any second edition of his book.

Taking Potshots

David Gross

It is no news that Russell Jacoby writes well. Anyone familiar with his *Social Amnesia* or *The Last Intellectuals* knows that already. Few cultural critics can match him in clarity of expression or the ability to craft a well-turned phrase, and fewer still can leaven their critiques with humor and yet not diminish the impact of what they have to say. Almost no one writing today can presume to

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assail the prose of others, as Jacoby does in *Dogmatic Wisdom*, for fear that the same criticism will be turned back on oneself —and with good reason. Jacoby, then, is a rare bird. He is a member of the tribe who nevertheless is not afraid to attack its idols. And in *Dogmatic Wisdom* there is no denying that some of the most cherished idols are assaulted, above all those of the Political Right (i. e., the notions of education pressed by Bloom, D'Sousa, etc.) as well as those of the political Left (i.e., the PC views of Berubé, Lauter and others whose positions appear to be "principled" but in fact mask a deeper careerism).

In focusing on contemporary American education, and specifically on the recent "cultural wars" that have been disturbing the groves of academe, Jacoby organizes his thoughts around three pivotal processes. He does not give these processes names, but I would label them reversals, misplaced emphases and obfuscations.

As the word implies, reversal happens when something turns into its opposite. (An example from Jacoby: In the 1830s Horace Mann saw American public education producing a "stream of knowledge" which would water the land with the virtues of democracy and individualism. Today, says Jacoby, the reverse is true. "No one talks of fountains and streams of knowledge; the talk now is of metal detectors, privitization, hopeless schools, test scores, and the breakdown of public education"). A misplaced emphasis occurs when something trivial is invested with importance while something important is either trivialized or overlooked altogether. (Example: efforts are made to proscribe violent words on campus, while a violent society is tolerated: or, in Jacoby's words, radicals spend their time attacking "society's idiom" but pay scant attention to "the idiom's society," with the result that "language gets better as society gets worse"). Finally, an obfuscation happens when one thing is highlighted in order to hide something else. (Example: conservative critics decry the shift away from a humanities curriculum but at the same time turn a blind eye to, and refuse to criticize, the "grubby commercialism" of a society that engenders the utilitarianism and consumerism that have caused this shift in the first place. Or similarly, but on the other side of the political spectrum, radicals speak easily of revolution and subversion, but such language only serves to cover up what they do not want anyone to notice — namely, their own secure and often prestigious social-economic status).

These are some of the processes that receive attention in *Dogmatic Wisdom*. Though Jacoby's descriptions of these reversals, misplaced emphases and obfuscations are convincing, it is hard to know what, if anything, one can do with this new knowledge, since the processes he depicts appear to be beyond human influence or control. With Jacoby's guidance, we can observe decline and degeneration at work, and we can take note of all the forms of self-deception now current among the professoriat, but there does not seem to be any way to change or alter what is going on around us. What is one to do, for example, with Jacoby's key point that in the course of focusing on "liberal education" we are overlooking something more important: our "illiberal society?" This is

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a typical Jacoby formulation, but the way it is set up leaves unexplained how one would go about solving the problem. Is Jacoby saying, for instance, that we should focus on our illiberal society *instead* of liberal education, and if this is what he means, then what will happen to education? Who will speak up for it? Or does Jacoby mean that if we focus on our illiberal society we will somehow also address and perhaps solve our educational problems, since social issues are at the root of educational ones? If this is his claim, then he needs to provide more evidence to support his contention. What he does provide is a general sense that no matter how one approaches the problems of education, they will not be solved because they are essentially unsolvable. Jacoby's bleak conclusion: "The physical plant decays: teachers are distracted; classes too large; resources too little; costs too high; students angry," and yet it is useless to point an accusatory finger at anyone, since the "density of problems explodes conventional schemas of blame."

Another example of a limitation built into Jacoby's approach is the way he lampoons those who try to clean up racist language on campus while doing nothing about the racism that permeates society as a whole. The manner in which the issue is posed makes *any* concern about language reform seem foolish or absurd in light of the larger issues neglected as a result. But is this really the best way to think about the matter of bias-free language? What if there are connections between language and society that Jacoby fails to notice — connections that make it possible for changes in language and expression to alter, in the long run, aspects of social reality. This question does not really get the hearing it deserves, because Jacoby goes after those scholars who, in asserting that "reality is linguistic," seem to think that by changing language they can change society *tout court*! Of course, it is not that easy. Jacoby is right to poke fun at such idiocies, but in doing so he obscures a deeper truth: that language can affect perception, and perception can affect the way one acts, and (if society is essentially an ensemble of relations) the way one acts can and does affect social reality. This truth gets lost because Jacoby seems to indicate that language, perception and society are not part of the same continuum, but exist in separate compartments. This is why the so-called language reformers, as Jacoby describes them, seem so comical: they fail to realize what Jacoby appears to accept — that society can be changed *only* at the social, not at the linguistic level. The reformers, in other words, make a category mistake about the sphere they are in: they mistakenly believe that "words, symbols, and images" (which is practically all they deal with) *are* reality as such, and that by revamping them they in effect revamp "reality." But by focusing so much attention on this absurdity, Jacoby neglects all the filiations that do in fact exist between spheres: filiations that make it possible at times for changes in one sphere to have not only reverberations but also important consequences in the others.

It is true that if Jacoby had tried to demonstrate the multiple connections and relations that exist between language, perception and society, he would

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have had to write a different book. That would have been a shame, since then we would not have this one. What we get in *Dogmatic Wisdom* are moments of illumination, shocks of recognition, and a good sense of how easily academics delude themselves about what they are doing and why they are doing it. These achievements are enough and more than enough. Thanks to Jacoby, the problems of American education can at least be seen more clearly now, even if the solutions remain well out of view.

Cold Fusion

Robert D'Amico

Consider the following example of unintended consequences. In the past 20 years colleges and universities reacted to criticism that their students lacked essential skills after graduation by making minimum credits in math and composition mandatory. Whether or not these mandatory hours succeeded in improving student performance in these areas, these requirements did produce an unintended transformation of university faculty. Since the composition requirement often remained within English departments, these departments rapidly expanded at the expense of the rest of the humanities. At many large state universities English departments now rival that other benchmark in departmental size due to requirements, chemistry. Coincidental with this administrative change was the rise of deconstruction and postmodernism as intellectual movements among graduate students and faculty in Ph.d-granting English departments. The result of these factors was the influx of large numbers of faculty trained in a new intellectual alchemy which claimed the power to transmute both its students and institutions through the study of literature, culture and composition.

The debate about the universities has occurred in two stages. At first, with Bloom and Hirsch, for example, these institutions were accused of failing in their central task of turning out educated students, and parents were motivated to demand better in view of the cost of tuition. Then, in a second stage,

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certain critics, DeSouza and Sykes for example (the title of Charles Sykes book, *Profscam*, says it all with regard to this critical point) realized that the efforts to remedy the first complaint were being sabotaged, coopted or exploited by this new academic alchemy. Conservatives looked on with horror as a new volatile blend of postmodernist and deconstructionist preparations, whose ingestion was to transmute the base metals of a student's soul to something less than golden perfection, had taken over the teaching of composition and cultural studies. This transformative mixture was actually the result of motley elixirs: philosophical skepticism and sophism, avant garde literary and artistic tastes, political leftism of a mild, liberal sort, commitment to cultural diversity and tolerance, an equal commitment to implementing and enforcing a radical feminist politics, a view of education as pedagogical strategy and an unshakable conviction that this hermetic guide to culture was unassailable and thus all opposition was a form of resistance. Laboratories fusing the political, intellectual and institutional elements, as guided by these ideas of postmodernism, began to arise at most universities.

Russell Jacoby's *Dogmatic Wisdom* is a kind of sequel to *The Last Intellectuals*. But whereas *The Last Intellectuals* was a heart-felt analysis of the eclipse of the public intellectual, a loss Jacoby argued deserved our attention and concern, in the present book his tone is of a parent listening to a particularly whiny child. There is a bemused, quiet patience about the book, but the reader comes to feel its author finds his targets largely trivial. In *The Last Intellectuals* Jacoby examines with care and some detail the ideas of, for example, Lionel Trilling and even Sidney Hook, and concludes thay are vastly overrated. But in *Dogmatic Wisdom* there is little time spent with the Graffs or Jamesons of today. The vast expanse of this new arcane and Latinate prose is left as a precipitate; rather than being decomposed and examined, it is dumped.

Jacoby's central argument is that these recent debates about the universities and their professorial magicians are mere superstructural phenomena. They serve the classic function of distracting society from its real problems by supplying a parallel, yet shadow debate; words, texts, canons, cultures have all become so many names to be chanted, so many spells to be cast against society's noxious gases. These rituals of academic life exorcise the spell of social immutability with fake experiments and claims of radicalism. But, Jacoby concludes, what rules the culture rules the university. It is the demands of commercial growth which require this academic mystification, and the universities, like the entertainment industry, are there to intoxicate the public with whiffs of creativity and power. But it takes labor, not magical elixirs, to mine the ore of social production and wealth.

Where have we heard this before? The force of such arguments will never go away, even if Marxist theory is now as dead as Ricardo or as obscure as Lacan, because there are nuggets of gold in such infrastructural assays. But does Jacoby have the right account of what assails the universities today?

The litany of foolishness that Jacoby documents — the inter-generational

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faculty strife over curriculum, the bad prose, the weakness for intellectual fads, the pretension, the myopia — has been a constant feature of higher education, Either education has always failed in these ways, or it is failing today in ways it did not in the past. If the second point is the case, then there must be something other than the above weaknesses to explain that greater failure.

The ideological argument may be correct, but it may also be beside the point. Perhaps universities themselves can be linked by some functional argument to the growth of capitalism and commercial culture, and perhaps the choices of students are likewise determined by these economic and commercial forces; yet all of that is compatible with these disputes about the universities.

Ttwo years ago two scientists, Fleischman and Pons, claimed to have produced energy from a fusion reaction — it seems apparent now that either the experiment did not occur as described or the energy produced was not the result of a fusion reaction; they may simply, as one colleague commented, have re-invented the dry cell battery, in the humanities the intellectual equivalent of "cold fusion" is announced every day, taught to students and taken as defended. It contributes, however, to the current intellectual situation not to argue about such fundamental ideas. The new alchemists of postmodernism are rhetorical rather than argumentative, and initellectual cold fusion supports them in their position that the cogency of their ideas do not matter. All that matters, many have proclaimed for a decade, is power. Fleischman and Pons won enormous institutional support from the University of Utah, and there was already congressional lobbying in support of their work, all of which may explain the press coverage. But for all that their claims failed because if they were right much of contemporary physics was wrong — and though that result was logically possible, they actually had to make their case, not merely prove it was logically possible. I understand Jacoby's reluctance to wade through the chemical pollution unleashed with these new literary chemists of the academy. But the approach of patient analysis would have had more impact than the resignation which decides that, as always, the action is elsewhere.

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Maybe it is that Bad

Kevin Mattson

By refusing to bow to the Right or the Left, Russell Jacoby rises above the typical debates about academic life in America and carves out a more subtle and perceptive criticism of higher education. He criticizes the Right for ignoring the threat to liberal education posed by commercialism and contends that conservatives become implicated in their own critique: "Today's conservatives . . . damn marginal leftist academics, not an expanding commercialization, as the threat [to education]. They bless the market economy and curse the educational system it engenders" (141). Critics such as Allan Bloom and Dinesh D'Souza miss the boat as well, by focusing their attention solely on elite universities. At state institutions and community colleges the problems do not stem from philosophical nihilism, as the conservatives argue, but from an excessive number of business courses and a utilitarian approach to education which hinders the possibility of a truly liberal education: "To reflect on liberal education today is to consider not only its demise but the reason for its demise, an illiberal society" (xviii). Jacoby also contends that complaints about "political correctness" are exaggerated. But is he convinced by his own arguments? Although he begins by claiming that conservatives wrongly attack "marginal leftist academics," he spends a good part of the sixth chapter of his book on these very same academics. If their arguments are so silly and their power so marginal, why spend so much time on them?

While it may be true that Bloom and D'Souza focus on elite universities to the exclusion of the rest, is it also true that what happens at such places as Harvard and the University of Chicago affect few peoples' lives? Already "political correctness" and "multicultural" sensitivity training have invaded public high schools. As Arthur Schlesinger has observed recently: "The New York curriculum [in 1987] went [far] in minimizing Western traditions. A two year global studies course divided the world into seven regions — Africa, South Asia, East Asia, Latin America, the Middle East, Western Europe, and Eastern Europe — with each region given equal time. The history of Western Europe was cut back from a full year to one quarter of the second year, American history was reduced to a section on the Constitution; then a leap across Jefferson, the Civil War, and Reconstruction to 1877."[1] Were this not bad enough, Leonard

1. Arthur Schlesinger, *The Disuniting of America* (New York: Norton, 1992), pp. 66ff.

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Jeffries, the racist and anti-Semitic professor known for his theories of West Europeans as "ice people" and Africans as "sun people," headed a Task Force on Minorities which made further proposals to adopt a fully Afrocentric curriculum. Jacoby's analysis cannot explain these developments. Jeffries, a tenured professor at the City University of New York, has affected public high schools — not an elite university.

Another case which begs Jacoby's dismissal of the "culture wars" recently emerged in Washington DC. The Ruth Webb Elementary School paid Abena Walker $84,000 to rewrite the curriculum to reflect Afro-centric principles. Her credentials turned out to be bogus — she graduated from a school where she was the only faculty member and the only student.[2] The fact that this could take place illustrates that multiculturalism and identity politics have considerable influence beyond the elite schools and that the Right's criticism of these new "Left" programs cannot be so easily dismissed as Jacoby would have it. Affirmative action, which Jacoby ignores, clearly shows how identity politics has shaped institutions. Not only has it affected academic life, it is starting to have an impact on many levels of American society.[3]

Jacoby cleverly belittles his opponents' claims, and he has solid grounds for doing so. But this tactic tends to obviate a more thorough analysis. For example, he brushes off the Great Books program as an acquisitive business deal of little substance. But there was more to it than that. This program grew out of endeavors to create a public culture. John Erskine, the father of the Great Books program prior to Mortimer Adler and Robert Hutchins, hoped to make the classics available to everyone. Academics attacked him for suggesting that ordinary people could read important works without the aid of university professors. "Arguing that Erskine's curriculum would perpetuate superficiality at the expense of 'true scholarship,' they foresaw the sacrifice of 'real understanding' as students galloped through the material."[4] Jacoby focuses too much on Adler's and Hutchins' later efforts and elitism, while dismissing the ideals which motivated Erskine. But it is precisely programs like the Great Books which shed light on the contemporary crisis of education. We must cease to see the university as the only place where higher education can or should occur. Such excessive responsibility breeds academic hubris. Jacoby well understands that people must find other ways of educating themselves, but he leaves the reader wondering how this can be done.

Whenever Jacoby alludes to past American writers on education, it is usually to Benjamin Rush and Horace Mann. Both believed in the need for a public school system, and Mann did something about it by helping establish public

2. On this incident, see *The New Republic* (September 13, 1993), p. 10.

3. On affirmative action in the business world, see Heather McDonald, "The Diversity Industry," in *The New Republic* (July 5, 1993), pp. 22-25.

4. Joan Shelley Rubin, *The Making of Middle-Brow Culture* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1992), p. 167.

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schools in Boston. But there is another way of thinking about public education that demands attention today. Orestes Brownson was Horace Mann's most astute critic. Where Mann looked with disdain on the popular lecture system of the lyceum, Brownson saw in it a hope that education could be less formal — rooted not in schools but in human locales and daily life. Opposing Mann's belief that people should be educated only in certified public schools, Brownson argued: "Our children are educated in the streets, by the influence of their associates, in the field and on the hill sides, by the influences of surrounding scenery and overshadowing skies, in the bosom of the family, by the love and gentleness, or wrath and fretfulness of parents, by the passions of affections they see manifested, the conversations to which they listen, and above all by the general pursuits, habits, and moral tone of the community."[5] Brownson believed that only when education grew out of daily life could it be healthy and vital.

Jacoby's hope for a public that reads, as expressed in *The Last Intellectuals*, should be remembered here. We need more ideas like Brownson's to save education. We need a broader concept of education — one which stresses democratic self-education rooted in localities. Only when education derives from ordinary human interaction will the load be taken off formal institutions. Children must learn discipline in families, not in schools. Young adults must learn to communicate in their communities, not in colleges. Only then can formal educational institutions do what they should — educate. Only then can we provide those who want one with a truly "liberal" education.

5. Quoted in Christopher Lasch, *The True and Only Heaven* (New York: Norton, 1991), pp. 188f.

Questionable Wisdom

John A. DeBrizzi

Russell Jacoby's *Dogmatic Wisdom* seems to imply that American education was once significantly better than today: "To reflect on liberal education today is to consider not only its demise but the reason for its demise, an illiberal society" (xviii). Similarly, "a liberal education shatters under the weight of commercialism" (xii), and there has been a "corroding" of liberal education

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(8). Thus he calls for an "effort to resucitate a liberal education" (14), and help it "regain its vitality" (15). Yet his analysis also makes it clear that the American educational system was never really all that liberal. Only at the very end of the book does the real complaint appear: that "the democratic promise" of education has not been fulfilled (196). As such *Dogmatic Wisdom* is a moral critique bemoaning the wide gulf separating the promise and reality of education in America. There is nothing wrong with moral critique, but Jacoby does not contribute much that is substantively new. A good portion of *Dogmatic Wisdom* is devoted to exposing the fecklessness of Left-academic scholarship. Yet, nearly a century ago Thorstein Veblen excoriated "the kept classes" and argued that "the scholarly classes" were among the most wasteful and useless.[1] Jacoby's moral criticism only locates contemporary Left-academics within Veblen's ranks of "the kept."

American education, however, will require more than moralism to rectify itself. A recent study by the US Department of Education revealed that nearly half the adults are barely literate in English and basic mathematics.[2] The report concluded that older Americans had lower scores because they had less education than younger respondents. But how much schooling is required to render one competent to write a business letter or to calculate the length of a bus trip (which is what the test dealt with)?

This report came as no surprise to critics of American schools. A generation ago Michael Katz cautioned that the notion most students received a solid training in basic skills was no more than "a regressive fantasy."[3] The most significant difference between public education yesterday and today does not seem to lie in any drastic decline in the skills of students. Rather, education as a system of social control and labor allocation has become disjoined from the economy.[4] Probably Jacoby would not disagree with this. According to him, the problems of education are ultimately the problems of a capitalist society: the educational system is in disarray because capitalist society has become overwhelmed by violence, economic injustice and inequality: "educational conflicts would ebb if the institutional infrastructure were solid and secure . . . Today society cannot even provide the cultural space and quiet essential for learning"

1. See Thorstein Veblen, *The Theory of the Leisure Class* (New York: Mentor Books, 1953), and *The Vested Interests and the Common Man* (New York: Capricorn Books, 1969), Chapter 8. *The Higher Learning in America: A Memorandum on the Conduct of Universities by Businessmen* (New York: Augustus Kelley, 1965) remains indispensable.

2. *The New York Times*, September 9, 1993.

3. Michael Katz, *Class, Bureaucracy and Schools. The Illusion of Educational Change in America* (New York: Praeger, 1971), p. xxvi.

4. While it is important to consider that changes in society such as the dissolution of the family have had a psychological impact on the young, to the point of affecting their educability, even this is not new. For generations, social scientists have explained poor student performance in terms of psychological disturbance or family disruption. See Donald Shoemaker, *Theories of Delinquency*, second edition (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), especially Chapter 5.

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(196). Maybe Jacoby prefers an earlier, more liberal form of capitalism. But this does not go beyond the liberal vision of a Robert Reich. In other words, if the contemporary problems of education can be traced to an "illiberal society," then the solution is to make society more liberal by, among other things, providing better funding for educational institutions. Yet, if a more liberal society did not result in a better quality of education in the past, why would it do so in the future? Jacoby cannot avoid this *cul de sac* because he believes that "education and society reflect each other" (xii). But the problems in education cannot be reduced to those of capitalist society. Today many are related to New Class control of educational institutions, not capitalism as such. As Derber, Schwartz and Magross put it, "Today's most powerful knowledge class — professionals — does not rule in any society. But professionals have infused both capitalism and socialism with a modern mandarin logic. By creating a belief in their own knowledge as objective expertise, and helping to organize schooling and the division of labor to suit their own ends, professionals have essentially turned modern knowledge into private property."[5]

A critique of schooling must be mediated by a critique of the New Class domination of pedagogy and educational institutions. Jacoby is probably correct in claiming that many arguments over the curriculum are moot in that "multiculturalism may be a station en route to monoculturalism" (156). What is missing in his analysis, however, is any discussion of multiculturalism as an instance of the artificial negativity produced by bureaucratic liberalism. The impetus for multicultural education has come from governmental and educational bureaucracies, not from community groups. This distinguishes the contemporary situation from that of the 1920s. At that time, in reaction to a concerted effort at "Americanization," many immigrant communities created parochial schools and other private institutions to safeguard their cultures. By the end of the 1930s, however, schooling was no longer a key issue.[6] The motor behind recent educational changes is not conflict between government and communities but the needs and interests of the New Class.

The basic problem with education today is government. Thus, ". . . The first efforts of school reformers must be directed toward breaking down the bureaucratic form of schooling and changing the nature of its political control."[7] If education is to transmit culture effectively from one generation to the next, it is essential that it be under direct community control, rather than in the hands of a state with extraneous social agendas. A study published by The Brookings Institution concluded, "The best way to achieve significant, enduring reform is for states to take the initiative in withdrawing authority

5. Charles Derber, William Schwartz and Yale Magross, *Power in the Highest Degree. Professionals and the Rise of a New Mandarin Order* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), p. 5.

6. See Ira Katznelson and Margaret Weir, *Schooling for All. Class, Race and the Democratic Ideal* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), p. 134.

7. Katz, *op. cit.*, p. 120.

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from existing institutions and building a new system in which most authority is vested directly in the schools, parents, and students . . . As long as authority remains available at higher levels within state government, it will eventually be used to control the schools."[8] Without greatly diminishing New Class influence, the only thing likely to be improved by such measures is employment opportunities for members of the New Class.

8. John Chubb and Terry Moe, *Politics, Markets and America's Schools* (Washington, D.C.: The Brookings Institution, 1990), p. 219.

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Notes and Commentary:

Christopher Lasch (1932-1994)

Russell Jacoby

"Even though his career was cut short in its prime, leaving us immeasurably impoverished by the loss," Lasch wrote of his teacher Richard Hofstadter, he "left us a full and rounded body of work, not merely one or two important books, which is the best that most historians can hope for." Much of what Lasch wrote of Hofstadter could be said of Lasch himself. Like Hofstadter, his "imagination never rested for long, and his thought ranged widely, embracing political, social and cultural history." Like Hofstadter, he left us with more than a few important books. And if not in his prime — Hofstadter was 54 when he died — Lasch was hardly beyond it. His death leaves us immeasurably poorer.

"I grew up in the tradition of Middle Western progressivism," Lasch stated recently. But progressivism was more than his past. Like Hofstadter, Lasch continuously returned to it. From his first book in 1962, *The American Liberals and the Russian Revolution*, to his 1991 *The True and Only Heaven*, Lasch examined progressivism, and especially progressive intellectuals. His *oeuvre* might be classified as a sustained meditation on progressivism and intellectuals. The book that first brought him widespread attention, *The New Radicalism in America*, was subtitled "The Intellectual as a Social Type." *The True and Only Heaven* closed with a discussion of intellectuals as a "New Class."

Lasch was much more than an historian of progressivism: he was its most tenacious critic. He never tired of insisting that things do not alway improve; that the present may be worse than the past. He objected to intellectuals who celebrate history as a one-way street named progress. "American historical writing," he complained, "takes little account of the possibility of tragedy — missed opportunities, fatal choices, conclusive and irrevocable defeats. History has to have a happy ending." On exactly these grounds he criticized Hofstadter, who sometimes charted history as moving from a defective past to a superior future. Hofstadter dismissed populism as both obsolete and a threat to intellectuals. "The interpretation of populism as a nostalgic and backward-looking movement," wrote Lasch, "glosses too easily over [its] genuinely radical elements." Against forward-looking intellectuals Lasch salvaged the "radical"

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past. In *The True and Only Heaven*, subtitled "Progress and its Critics," Lasch championed the "sensibility of the petty bourgeoisie," an ethos liberals and leftists deride as hopelessly retrograde. The petty bourgeoisie valued an "egalitarianism," "workmanship" and "loyalty" that leftist intellectuals neither fathom nor appreciate. In one of his final essays he wrote "we have lost our respect for honest manual labor." This statement marks the distance between Lasch and ideologues of a postmodern society.

Lasch's critique of progressivism brought him face to face with the American Left, with which he identified. "Radicalism — socialism — is the only longterm hope," he wrote in the 1960s. Yet he realized that, despite the nods to Nietzsche, Lukács and Critical Theory, the Left intelligentsia remained committed to Spencer, if not Coué: every day in every way thingss get better and better. Especially in psychological and family life, the American Left celebrated progress. Lasch dissented, challenging the vision of a postmodern family with parents working while a baby sitter watches junior watch television. The Left shared this vision, although in the leftist version the baby sitter became a child care professional. Lasch asked whether the new self promoted by cultural radicals was an advance over the bourgeois self; he wondered whether consumerism, not liberation, was the future. "My own faith in the explanatory powers of the old ideologies began to waver in the mid-1970s, when my study of the family led me to question the Left's program of sexual liberation, careers for women, and professional child care."

These questions soured Lasch's relation with liberals and leftists. He did not disavow but raised doubts about feminism and an apocalyptic environmentalism. "My objections to the 'new consciousness' must not be misunderstood as a defense of liberal humanism or as an attack on feminism, environmentalism, or the peace movement." For many on the Left, however, Lasch had become a neo-conservative untouchable, noticed only to be damned. In the mid-1980s my occasional relation with the "Voice Literary Supplement" ended when I submitted a sympathetic review of Lasch's *The Minimal Self*. Presumably only a savage attack would pass muster. Yet Lasch never joined the neo-conservatives, whom he consistently criticized.

Unlike many successful academics, Lasch did not hop from job to job or even from conference to conference. For a quarter century the University of Rochester was his home. Was this choice or necessity? Many leftists disdained Lasch, and historians may have concluded that he had veered off into social criticism or (a fate worse than death) journalism. In the regular surveys of the state of history sponsored by professional groups, Lasch goes unmentioned. The historians probably saw him as a renegade, no longer contributing to "the field." The hostility may have been mutual. Lasch not only offered a stinging critique of professionalization, his own writing and life ignored professional niceties. He eschewed the monograph, scholarly communication and the eight-hundred page tome. He rarely showed up at professional conferences. Again a comment on his teacher may be revealing. He remarked that

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Hofstadter "had little use for the ceremonial and self-promotional aspects of professional life. He rarely attended meetings of historical associations. Nor did he worry about his own reputation and standing in the profession."

Lasch was the son of an Omaha newspaperman. This may also explain something of his career. He easily and often assumed a public voice. Including a posthumous book, Lasch left us with nine volumes plus countless essays for periodicals like *Harper's* and *Salmagundi*. Although not an elegant writer, public discussions and writings made up his world. His books *The Culture of Narcissism* and *The Minimal Self* became, for a moment, popular and discussed. I do not think any other historian of his generation moved as forcefully into the public arena; nor did his students follow him — yet. When he died, many who vaguely knew of Lasch remarked on his age; he was much younger than they imagined. This sentiment bespeaks the essential role Lasch carved out; he recalls an obsolete phase of cultural life. He wrote and thought like public intellectuals of the past. His work summons up the moralism and polemics of a Lewis Mumford or a Thorstein Veblen rather than the bland professionals of today. Lasch was hardly the "last intellectual," but his work may be best glimpsed in the rear-view mirror of a BMW speeding along the information highway to a conference on meta-discourse.

Lasch wrote the preface to my first book, *Social Amnesia*, and even as gravely ill, read the galleys of my latest, *Dogmatic Wisdom*. I know little of him as a teacher; I only know and cherish his loyalty to students and his stubborn independence; he kowtowed to no one, pursuing ideas regardless where they led or who they offended. His work is hardly a flawless or seamless whole. Apart from disagreements, I sometimes had difficulty following his books. His moral fervor was evident, but his arguments and even the organization of the books, sometimes lost me. Yet Lasch on Hofstadter is true of Lasch himself. "Even as I write these reservations," stated Lasch in his foreword to the reissue of Hofstadter's *The American Political Tradition*, "I am struck by their inadequacy in the face of the richness and complexity of Hofstadter's work and of the difficulty of arriving at an assessment of it."

Lasch closed his foreword to Hofstadter's book wondering whether his own generation of historians was superior to Hofstadter's. "As activists, we have achieved far less than we hoped; as scholars, our record is undistinguished on the whole." These unsentimental thoughts signal something unique about Lasch: his lack of self-aggrandizement, his refusal to join in the general celebration, and his sober view of the intellectual scene. He ended his appreciation doubting whether the younger generation will be superior in understanding or accomplishment to "the last generation." Lasch's doubts have now become our own.

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*An Interview with Christopher Lasch**

Peggy Brawer and Sergio Benvenuto

Benvenuto: Your book, *The True and Only Heaven: Progress and its Critics*, is about to be published. What does the title mean?

Lasch: It comes from a story by Hawthorne. It tries to reconstruct a tradition of "populist" as opposed to more familiar conservative critiques of progress. What I mean is a kind of social thought and action often embodied in 19th century movements primarily of farmers but also artisans, craftsmen and skilled workers. I also argue that, in some sense, early 20th century syndicalism was the last flowering of this impulse and the things that often go with it: humanitarianism, a national system of education, an increasingly complicated network of philanthropic institutions both public and private. In the 19th century there was a lot of talk about *improvement* — a notion that summarizes much of the more attractive aspects of the idea of progress, not just technology. But it is all predicated on the assumption that small-scale production is destined to give way to large-scale production and large-scale organization in every sphere of life. That premise strikes me as highly debatable and, it turns out, was not universally accepted in the 19th century. The most interesting thinkers are those who questioned it. That is what attracts me to syndicalism. The one non-Anglo-American thinker I deal with is Sorel who, after all, wrote a book titled *The Illusion of Progress*.

Benvenuto: Sorel was influential in American thought?

Lasch: Well, I cannot say he was. There was a sort of syndicalist movement briefly in the US. But, on closer examination, it was not really syndicalism. I am referring to the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW), which was a very radical industrial union, whose slogan was "One Big Union" including unskilled as well as skilled workers. It is usually considered the epitome of labor radicalism, which it probably was. Yet it was not anything like what Sorel had in mind. The nearest equivalent is guild socialism in England, but that too had only a very fleeting influence on the American scene. America was not very hospitable to these causes.

Brawer: What about all 19th century utopian communities?

Lasch: I do not deal with those because, in many ways, they are themselves

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expressions of progressive ideology. The tradition I am talking about is quite un-utopian, often anti-utopian. It tends to be skeptical of programs for the wholesale rehabilitation of society. That goes along with its emphasis on small-scale production, its opposition to the market, or at least its advocacy of a small-scale market that does not pervade all of society.

Benvenuto: Is there a tradition that considers itself "leftist"?

Lasch: Well, that is what is so interesting. It is hard to classify. It is very radically democratic, and, in that sense, it clearly belongs on the Left. But, on the other hand, it has a good deal more respect for tradition than is common on the Left, and for religion too. Again, Sorel is the person who expresses a lot of this, both in its most compelling and its most sinister form, since his leanings towards fascism are also part of it. One cannot ignore that.

Benvenuto: Wasn't this populist criticism of industrial society also strong in the 1960s? I'm thinking, for example, about Ghandi's thought and certain aspects of Maoism contraposing, for example, the countryside to the city. This is paradoxical for a communist thinker. The same can be said of Cambodia, where the Khmer Rouge developed essentially a populist rather than a Marxist critique of industrial society.

Lasch: Yes. That is the ultimate nightmare. It shows what can go horribly wrong with ideas such as these. If Cambodia is the ultimate outcome of this program, then it is truly horrifying. It had not occurred to me to talk about the Khmer Rouge, but I do try and acknowledge the terrible weaknesses and limitations of this tradition, as well as its value. And it is, finally, very difficult to classify as either Right or Left. That is what interests me, at a time when the debate between Right and Left — the historical tradition of debate, which has been going on since the French revolution — has been exhausted.

Benvenuto: Maybe in the US less than Europe, because in the US the Left and the Right have been traditionally weaker than in Europe.

Lasch: True, but it can still be argued that this debate has also structured American politics, not as dramatically, of course, and the clashes have never been as apparently irreconciliable. America has a long tradition of muddling through, and ideological issues have never been as sharply defined. But they are still present, and much of the American political debate in the last 150 years has been between progressives and conservatives.

Benvenuto: What is the main argument of *The True and Only Heaven*?

Lasch: Part of it is this attempt to reconstruct a tradition that is neither Right nor Left and for which it is difficult to find any label. Populism is a rather slippery term, and I am not altogether happy with it. Not all the people I talk about used it in describing themselves. Some of them are thinkers who do not seem as having much to say about politics, Emerson being the principal example. He has usually been seen as an individualist with no interest in politics, but whose thought can be seen as a more refined version of some of the same ideas that can be found in 19th century labor and agrarian movements.

Benvenuto: What is the link with your earlier books

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Lasch: In some ways *The True and Only Heaven* is quite different from them. For one thing, there is no psychoanalysis. The link may be that I was so often accused by critics as being blindly opposed to progress, as being nostalgic — this word was constantly levelled, not just against me but against a lot of other people critical of the existing organization of society — so I began to think about the assumption behind that charge, the assumption that makes it so easy to dismiss various criticisms as futile nostalgia for the past. There is a chapter on nostalgia in this book, in which I try to distinguish between memory and nostalgia. Memory tries to use the past and explain the links between past and present. In the case of individuals, it tries to explain how the past made them who they are — in Wordsworth's phrase: "The child is the father of the man" — whereas the nostalgic attitude towards the past assumes a radical gap between them. The latter is fascinated by a past that cannot be recovered and it is not a formative influence on the present but is valued precisely because it is over and done with. This can easily coexist with a naive belief in progress.

Benvenuto: So, *The True and Only Heaven* is essentially a socio-historical book?

Lasch: Right. I have not rejected earlier categories but simply moved beyond them. I just did not have anything more to say about them. At any rate, I wanted to write a book with a more explicitly historical dimension. There are a couple of concluding chapters on current political debates. The last part of the book tries to explain why American liberalism, which was always committed to the idea of progress in its most attractive form — in a form that understood it to have a moral and political as well as a technological dimension — why American liberalism now finds itself in such trouble, why it seems no longer able to offer a compelling vision.

Benvenuto: Do you agree with these appraisals of liberalism or is it just a fashion? I know that it is now considered an insult to be called a liberal in the US.

Lasch: I think it is a long-term development not only in America but also in England — the two countries I know best. I do not think that the Left in those countries will ever be the same.

Benvenuto: At least in philosophy, however, liberalism seems to be reasserting itself in the US, through Rawls and through a philosopher such as Rorty. What do you think of Rorty's ideas — at least those articulated in his *Contingency, Irony and Solidarity*?

Lasch: Rorty's ideas are another symptom of what I see as a serious crisis of liberalism. I do not find his arguments very convincing. It is a liberalism which has deliberately forgotten all the universal, mystical assumptions which at one time rendered it so influential. His postmodern liberalism has given up all rights to talk about public life. Today public life is seen as a market in which people must completely suspend their own culture and values, in favor of few minimal rules, those structuring all markets. It is not an accident that I have spoken of a "minimalist" culture. Public life is a Kuwaiti bazaar, to use Rorty's own image, surrounded by a variety of private clubs. And within these private clubs one can do all he wants. But none of those things that are most

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important — ethics, religion, taste — will be allowed to penetrate public life. Of course, Rorty's conception is fairly adequate to present American reality, but without a hint of criticism of this reality — of a society in which there is an extremely rigorous separation between private and public life.

Benvenuto: Against this postmodern liberalism you contrapose a "cultural conservatism." By limiting itself to public life, liberalism has lost its own moral authority.

Lasch: Exactly. And you could easily bring this directly back to the business of education. It has become difficult to make any claims about even what institutions of education ought to be doing, what their purpose is, whether there ought to be any common studies, whether it is important for students to know something about their major cultural traditions that brought them where they are.

Benvenuto: There is a strong drive for each sub-culture or ethnic group to demand very different kinds of education. What seems to be missing is a common American ideology. Is this just a trend or a permanent phenomenon?

Lasch: It is both. It is an ideology that helps structure reality and give it a certain legitimacy, while delegitimating the notion that there are some, if not universal values, at least some sufficiently widespread within the Western tradition worth teaching. That is now seen as just another form of cultural hegemony or imperialism.

Brawer: Is that really happening in universities, or is it more smoke than fire?

Lasch: It is having an impact. As usual, the way universities operate is by making a concession here, one there, without any rationale, so the result is much more confusing than any consistent application of an ideology.

Brawer: In *The Culture of Narcissism* you criticized the fragmentation of American education, which had to do with this sort of menu approach. This competition among ethnic traditions, courses, etc., seems to have been possible only because that kind of fragmented structure was already in place.

Lasch: You are right. This helps legitimate that state of affairs, which grew up for quite different reasons, having nothing to do with any of these ideas, but with the fact that educators, including faculties, were too lazy to defend any kind of structure in the face of attacks in the 1960s, coming from a different set of pressures, having nothing to do with ethnic subcultures.

Brawer: Although it has something to do with an attempt by minorities to get into the university system — even as that system is collapsing.

Lasch: Right. It is the scrambling aboard a sinking ship.

Benvenuto: In what sense is it a sinking ship?

Lasch: In part because the system is running out of money, but also because it has no compelling reason to exist. It cannot justify itself. It cannot lay very effective claim to a larger share of public support when it does not have any way of explaining why this is a public function at all. Why should societies pay heavily to institutions that do not know what they are doing, that seem to have no serious, central purpose?

Benvenuto: Many people think that in Japan, for example, economic success

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is linked to the Japanese government's strong emphasis on education.

Lasch: Of course, that argument is made here constantly. Maybe that is the last argument still effective in demanding a bigger share of the national budget. But often those arguments are not linked to that emphasis on the need for public support. Often it is just the other way around. The managerial types who are most likely to use that argument for education — the Japanese model — are often the advocates of neo-conservative positions that want to diminish the role of government in education, want to privatize larger and larger sectors of the educational system, including especially the lower schools.

Benvenuto: To compensate for this crisis in the high schools, many towns are organizing private high schools.

Lasch: If you wanted to locate one symptom that suggests the degree to which Americans have lost faith in what used to be called the American dream, it would be this growing belief that public education has failed.

Brawer: Historically in the US children were considered a national resource. Public education was based on that idea. In that sense, the abandonment of public education is the abandonment of children as a national resource. That was a very strong social impulse in postwar culture that now is gone. Maybe the 1960s were the end of a golden era, but we lived it as the beginning of one. Do you think there is some truth to that?

Lasch: Oh yes. What I wrote about education was too heavily influenced by the revisionist historiography that appeared in the 1960s, according to which the school system was just a means of channeling people, an instrument of social control, and so on. That did not do justice to this moral and democratic impulse.

Benvenuto: You think it is terrible that this American dream is fading, and that Americans should still have faith in it. In *The Culture of Narcissism* you described the shifts in the ethics of Americans and Westerners in general. I understood that to be a consequence of Max Weber's concept of secularization. Maybe narcissism was just the final stage of that process Weber considered irreversible. Your book, however, implies that this is just a trend, which can be reversed.

Lasch: One good thing that may have happened as a result of the intellectual disarray is the collapse of a lot of previously organizing ideas, and this is just as true in Europe as in the US. It has now become a cliché to say that great organizing ideologies such as Marxism have ceased to be very convincing. One desirable by-product is that it has made us skeptical about that accepted way of looking at history, deterministic theories of history, which hold that certain things have to happen in a sequence and are more or less irreversible. Of course, economic determinism has been under criticism from within Marxism for a long time. But there is a whole body of assumptions, shared by Weber, which I criticize in *The True and Only Heaven*. There are two assumptions that I have been mainly concerned with. One is that large-scale production is consistent with democracy, if properly organized. This idea was common to Marxism, many varieties of liberalism and social democracy. It is very widely shared. I

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do not think it is something that can be taken for granted. If anything, it is the other way around. Societies dominated by large-scale production are more and more hierarchical, inegalitarian and undemocratic. The other assumption is that there is an irreversable process.

Benvenuto: In *The Minimal Self* you criticized ecological approaches. What about attempts to overcome the Left-Right dichotomy with a global approach?

Lasch: I still believe that. Of all the issues you could mention, that one could become, more than any other, the focus of a politics based on a re-thinking of Left-Right distinctions. That is a good example of an issue that cuts across those distinctions. But I still do not think the way to do it is by positing a self that merges with its surroundings. I have not thought about that issue much beyond what I said in that book, nor have I kept up with the stuff that has been coming out, aside from a few obvious books such as Bill McKibbon's *The End of Nature*, much of which originally appeared in *The New Yorker*. That is the latest example of deep ecology thinking. There he argues, as the title suggests, that human control over nature has reached the point where there is no longer any point in talking about nature. The very category loses its meaning. I do not fully understand what that means. It is not a very philosophically cogent book. I also do not understand what we are suposed to make of it. If what he says is true, there is no hope. The whole book seems to be pervaded by a sense of loss, and not much else.

Benvenuto: It is a part of the new nostalgia.

Lasch: It seems that way. But I also think it is wrong, because the whole point is that nature is in the process of taking revenge. To me the point is that one cannot interfere endlessly with nature without expecting things to happen that cannot be controlled or even predicted. The whole process has consequences only very imperfectly understood, which is a good argument for caution. If one is not sure about what the outcome will be, that is a strong recommendation for prudence. In fact, that is the argument of a much better book which appeared in 1977, by David Ehrenfeld, *The Arrogance of Humanism*. His point is that the whole process of technological invention and its consequences is so complicated that one cannot simply know ahead of time what the cumulative effect of these things will be. Therefore, common sense suggests one should devise arrangements that interfere as little as possible with natural forces. That seems to me a cogent argument, which does not imply all the philosophical baggage Bateson has.

Brawer: What is your main objection to Bateson? That, in the end, his approach is apocalyptic and paralyzing?

Lasch: The problem is that there are no political consequences which follow from that kind of an argument. In a funny way that argument points to the same conclusion as Rorty's: meaning can only be found in private life. The whole public realm is written off, which means writing off the environment as well.

Benvenuto: Do you see these as the conclusions of a long English empirical tradition which, starting with Hume, emphasized the complete division between

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values and facts, that science and religion should be as separate as the state and the church?

Lasch: You mean the difference between privacy and intimacy. There is a good deal to be learned from that distinction. But that is not my idea. It is Hannah Ahrendt's, from *The Human Condition*. A lot of my ideas are ultimately hers. But when we talk about the split between private and public (and in a tone of voice that suggests disapproval) what we are really talking about is intimacy — the notion that meaning can be found only in private life — whereas the public realm is amoral. It is seen as a market and therefore, by definition, amoral. The political realm is seen as just another market, a place where people pool the wool over other people's eyes. Instead of cheating them in commercial exchanges, they cheat them by making false promises, and so on. In classical culture, privacy had quite a different set of meanings. On the one hand, it was the realm of labor and, even more, of the sort of repetitive cycle of biological existence: reproduction. Thus it was not redeemable (it was in public that one could have a life, that is, men could have a life. It was also the realm of women. It was women's domain. This is another way of denigrating it, but, on the other hand, it was also the realm of the sacred, the private, the household — what in Greek was called the *oikos*, the economy. So it was the realm in which shameful things went on, that had to be hidden, that could not be revealed in public. But, at the same time, there was a link between the sacred and the shameful. So these functions that were held in very low esteem were also invested with ultimate religious significance. All of which suggests a heavy load of moral meaning that the idea of intimacy just does not have.

Benvenuto: You mentioned abortion as something concerning which liberals have failed. Does that mean that, in order to be conservative one has to be against abortion?

Lasch: It means to be dissatisfied with pro-choice as a position. It is just qintessential liberalism because it assumes that the only important thing, or the only thing that can be said about this issue, is that people should have the right of private decision. It is an issue that should be resolved in private. There should be no public policy, except to keep people's options open.

Brawer: And do you think there should be public policy about it?

Lasch: There ought to be some. I do not know what it should be, but it is important to discuss it. And I think the refusal to discuss it has been very unfortunate on the liberal side. Not that the right-wing discussion is very intelligent, but it is a lot better and more morally enlightened. There are journals such as *The Human Life Review*, whose intellectual quality is not bad.

Benvenuto: *Human Life Review*? Is it a Catholic journal?

Lasch: I don't know. A lot of the authors are Catholics, and its vision is very limited, because it is not interested in much besides abortion, though it does see connections between those and other issues. But it canot be dismissed as frivolous. So there is at least the materials for a discussion much more interesting than anything we have had.

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Brawer: You don't think that the feminist arguments about women's bodies are serious?

Lasch: Yes they are, but I find them deeply unsatisfying because they seem to imply a proprietary view of the body which is kind of funny, coming from people on the Left who presumably do not believe in absolute property rights in other contexts, who understand that property is contingent, that property ownership implies certain responsibilities and so on. That seems to be a serious vacuum in the pro-choice argument, and a rather puzzling one.

Brawer: Do you see the pro-choice argument as essentially an argument about the ownership of the fetus?

Lasch: Concerning who owns my body, I have a right to do with it what I want to. The fetus is incidental. This connection is not addressed. That is part of what seems lacking in the argument. There is another party to this transaction who needs to be talked about.

Benvenuto: That other party would be the fetus?

Lasch: Yes. Then, too, there are other things that make me uncomfortable. Something important to talk more about would be the responsibility of men to women and to their offspring. This seems to get them off the hook all too easily.

Brawer: Social conditions bear that out. The new culture of poverty consists mostly of single women with children. Women who are single heads of households with children and no man have obviously not opted for abortion, or at least not always.

Lasch: Although a lot of them do. It is in their name that free abortion is defended. Much more needs to be said and done to make men responsible, instead of enabling them, with the full support of the law, to turn their back.

Benvenuto: This split between the public and the private is a major target of your critique of liberalism . . .

Lasch: Yes, and that is because today divisive discussions — especially those having to do with important values — are relegated to the sidelines of political debate. Liberalism has become identified with the refusal to countenance public conversations about such issues, because it is so uncomfortable with those discussions, that is, with precisely the kind of issues that have become increasingly important: abortion, school prayers and the whole range of social issues that contributed to the rise of the New Right in the 1970s and 1980s.

Benvenuto: Why did social issues such as abortion or even civil rights contribute to the rise of the New Right?

Lasch: Because the New Right has not only exploited certain sentiments, which are opposed, say, to the 1973 Supreme Court decision of Roe vs. Wade, but also the principle that such things ought to be talked about in public and, to that extent, it has addressed a legitimate body of concerns. One of the things the New Right stresses is the widespread feeling that the country has lost its way. There is not enough discussion about what America means, what should be handed down to our children. In many ways it is a misplaced and shallow reaction. Yet there are some legitimate concerns behind it. Take the belief that, in

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some important way, the country is failing its young. The remedies suggested are often silly — school prayers for example. Yet the concern is important and liberals have neither been able to nor willing to address any of these issues.

Benvenuto: In your books you often complain about a lack of interest in history in America. Does this have anything to do with what you are saying

Lasch: If enrollments in college history courses can be taken as a crude measure of this, they certainly have declined since the 1960s, when they were at their height. The same thing has happened with the social sciences, which have retreated from any active engagement with the real world into the building of elaborate theoretical models. They no longer serve as means of social criticism.

Brawer: How do you see the liberal perspective re-engaging real politics?

Lasch: What I would like to see is a movement both egalitarian — committed to a radical program of economic democracy, starting with a really progressive income tax, for example — and conservative on a great many social or cultural issues or at least willing to talk about these matters, instead of taking the position that such a conversation does not belong in politics. Instead, since the mid-1970s liberalism in America has gone in precisely the opposite direction; the liberal wing of the Democratic Party has been dominated by the so-called neo-liberals.

Benvenuto: Do you think the collapse of communism in Eastern Europe and Russia will change the way Americans see their own problems?

Lasch: That is possible. It does not take any great sophistication to see that there are big problems, which often present themselves in terms of international trade and particularly the Japanese threat, the loss of jobs, the loss of industry. All these things make it pretty clear that something does not seem to be working. They make people resistant to this notion that what has happened represents a great victory for the American way of life.

Brawer: Do you think this amazing collapse of state-socialism will have an impact on our ideas of progress?

Lasch: It could have an effect, a very bad one, to remove a lot of the moral content associated with the idea of progress — the rather naive insistence that certain moral and humanitarian improvements tended to go along with material improvements, that it was all of a piece, that modernization was a process which included democracy, equality etc., and that the socialist vision was the most powerful embodiment of that dream, even though it was unfortunately tied to the idea of progress and to the idea of historical necessity marching along. Leaving that aside, what the defeat of socialism leaves behind is the emptiest version of the idea of progress — more is better, more technology will save us, we need not address any issues of justice because somehow they will all be resolved in this future when everybody will be affluent.

Brawer: Do you see it as a moral triumph of democracy?

Lasch: Sure, democracy had a lot to do with. But it is ironic that it is at a time when democracy seems threatened in the West, certainly in this country, that it has such tremendous impact in Eastern Europe.

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Brawer: Could the end of state-socialism unveil the inefficiencies of market capitalism?

Lasch: That could happen. It changes things in all sorts of ways. It makes the world much more difficult for capitalists.

Benvenuto: According to you, we have to start from some pressing problem, not from the idea of a system. What do you think is one of the major problems that might be tackled now

Lasch: There are several. Consider the tax structure. Talk about regression. The tax structure we inherited from the New Deal was bad enough. It looked like a progressive tax with very high rates on big incomes, but there were so many loopholes built into it that it did not serve that function at all. Its main function was just to keep a lot of lawyers employed full-time trying to figure things out. But the new system is even worse. One of its main goals was to simplify the system, by eliminating a lot of deductions, but in fact it has made it vastly more complicated. And, of course, the other obvious point is that it is even more inegalitarian than before. This is a good point of attacking inequality in a fairly obvious and direct way and it might have some immediate impact. But it also is at the heart of a lot of other things that are wrong with this country. Among other things, it sustains a huge bureaucracy. The IRS is one of the biggest federal bureaucracies. It is also a source of much cynicism. It is one of the most obvious examples of a deeply corrupt kind of public policy. This was part of the discontent Reagen claimed to be addressing — the belief that, if one had enough legal talent, one could effectively escape taxation. It is very bad for a country when a lot of people believe that. It is a pretty good measure of when a polity is in big trouble — when it cannot tax its citizens, much less come up with a method of taxing them that strikes people as fair. The American tax system strikes people as being eminently unfair. And people, therefore, feel perfectly entitled to evade it in every possible way, with the added source of cynicism that evading means availing oneself of expensive legal talent. Therefore, the very people who ought to pay most are the ones paying the least. The most visible part of the tax system — the federal income tax — strikes most people as unjust, unfair, corrupt, and so on. Local taxes are open to other criticism. In other words, the tax revolt is a major problem and not something that just came out of the blue. It has a history. To convince people that paying taxes is part of their civic duties, it is necessary to invent a tax structure that bears some resemblance to justice.

Benvenuto: I am somewhat surprised by this discussion because your earlier books seemed aimed against a certain ideology: survivalism, narcissism, etc. Now your focus seems to be more on economic and political issues.

Lasch: Not really. This conversation seems to be creating that impression. It is mainly because you asked what points of attack there were, which suggested something fairly specifically political. The political implications of my earlier work were more conventional socialist. My political position has changed somewhat in the last dozen years, as a consequence of recent developments,

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and my growing sense that the tendency to define issues in terms of Left and Right is no longer very helpful.

Benvenuto: This is also a widespread sentiment in Europe. Many people think the old Left vs. Right division has been transcended. This kind of thinking, however, pushes people essentially in a conservative direction.

Lasch: You are probably right. That is also true in the US. The old Left, or what is left of it, does not like to hear that kind of talk. So, if I talk that way, that means I am regressing to conservative politics. But a lot of people are talking that way, and they are obviously not all on the Right.

Benvenuto: At any rate, do you think that psychoanalytic therapy is still useful in the US today

Lasch: I would not go that far. No, I do not think so. I am not sure I would even want to risk any broad generalizations about therapy at all. It is a profession which is not in very good shape.

Benvenuto: You said earlier that you are economically a leftist and culturally a conservative. What does it mean to be a cultural conservative

Lasch: It has to do with a viewpoint that emphasizes continuity. That is, the influence of the past on the present. It also stresses limits on the degree to which people can emancipate themselves from the past. I am partly indebted to psychoanalysis for that since that is one of the things it stresses — one can never fully come to terms with the past or shake it off and, more generally, with the proposition that there are limits on people's ability to order the world to their liking, whether by individual means or even through collective projects such as large-scale social engineering. Conservatives tend to be suspicious of all that. Furthermore, there is a long tradition of European conservatism that is also very opposed to the market and the values associated with it, to capitalism itself.

Benvenuto: What European conservatives do you have in mind?

Lasch: Mostly Catholic conservatives — those who argue that, at best, markets have a limited role but should not be allowed to displace every other form of transaction, people who deplore the materialism of modern society. They do not have a simplistic view of tradition either. They understand that traditions are constituted by disagreement. That is one of the things traditions are, so it helps to counter a naive, simple-minded understanding of traditions as if they were simply a set of assumptions never questioned, which is actually close to the Burkian understanding. Edmund Burke, who has had a major impact on American conservative thought, was rather explicit about associating tradition prejudice with things never questioned.

Benvenuto: In Europe people generally think Americans do not understand history for a very specific reason — because it is a New World. Maybe this is just a bias but, generally, European intellectuals think it is hard for an American intellectual to give real importance to historical traditions.

Lasch: Yes, but there is no question that Americans, almost from the very beginning, were fascinated with the future and with all the imagery of endless possibilty that was suggested by the New World. But, after all, the country is

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old now, and in many ways feels old.

Brawer: The frontiers are closed.

Lasch: Of course that is another constant theme in American history — the regular announcement that frontiers are closed. Turner was one of the first historians who argued that the frontier was over and that we could finally begin to understand its significance in American history, thus finally coming to grips with all the problems we had postponed, thinking they could be resolved through an endless process of expansion. No sooner had we made this announcement, than the country embarked on an imperial conquest, so there was a nice new frontier, and then there was space, the "new frontier."

Benvenuto: Do you think that today you are more or less sympathetic towards the Frankfurt School?

Lasch: Well, I can see that their thinking is flawed in the same way Marxism is flawed by its dependence on notions such as that history obeys some logic, whatever it is.

Benvenuto: What do you think about the hermeneutics debate?

Lasch: My sympathies in that debate are much more on the side of Gadamer than Habermas. I confess that there is a great deal of Habermas' work I have not even read, because I find what I have read so boring. He is just not an interesting thinker. I do not just mean that the works are dull to read, they are, but they are more deeply boring.

Benvenuto: Which Habermas are you referring to? The old Habermas or the new one of communication theory.

Lasch: The latter, the expert in perfect, ideal speech situations. That just seems to me such a dumb way of talking about politics.

Brawer: One final question about the family. What do you think of Barbara Ehrenreich's book, *The Hearts of Men?* Her thesis is that, in some ways, the feminist movement was a response to a male flight that was already in the works, rather than a rebellion against a system which worked in a certain way.

Lasch: It is a good book, and one can see immediately how much sense it makes. It changed my notion of how all this happened and made the whole history (the recent history of the family, feminism and so on) a lot more interesting than it appeared before. What is equally interesting about it is that it suggests something not in the linear development but a lot of interesting changes. I now think an awful lot of this had to do with the post-war movement to the suburbs, and had a significant impact on this whole complex of issues. I have recently reread Betty Friedan's book, *The Feminine Mystique*, and was amazed to discover how it is exclusively focussed on suburbs. A lot of the problems she deals with were very specific to the suburbs.

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More on Tradition

David Gross

My book *The Past in Ruins: Tradition and the Critique of Modernity* was the subject of a lengthy symposium in *Telos* 94. Though some of the commentary was positive, much was critical. In what follows, I will neither restate my position nor respond directly to all my critics. Rather I will attempt both to articulate a broader view of traditions and to present a more useful way to approach them.

In 1905, in an address to the *Verein für Sozialpolitik*, Weber said: "[W]e are in any case caught up in this development (i.e., the rule of bureaucratic life ideals), and the central question is not how we further and accelerate it but what we have to *set against* this machinery, in order to preserve a remnant of humanity from this parcelling-out of the soul."[1] Three elements are worth noting. First, there is the statement of the *problem*: the bureaucratization or rationalization of practically all areas of life in modern Western societies. Second, there is an indication of one major consequence of this problem: the "parcelling-out of the soul," a tendency in need of being checked. Third, there is the notion that to check the negative consequences of bureacratizaton and rationalization something needs to be "set against" it.

Weber was careful not to say that rationalization should be dismantled or abolished, an approach taken by some of his contemporaries on the far Right who believed it possible to reverse modernity by returning to an organic *Volksgemeinschaft*. He was also careful not to say that the apparently "bad" rationalization of his time might, by an immanent logic, be transformed into something "good." That position was taken by two of his students, Bloch and Lukács, who thought that *capitalist* rationalization (regarded as bad because it took the form of a reified *Produktionsvernunft*) might in time become something positive and healthy once it was returned to society at large "after The Revolution." Weber obviously rejected both solutions — the *völkisch* Right and the Marxist Left — offering instead a more modest one to the problem of rationalization based on what might be called a "setting against" strategy. He accepted rationalization as something here to stay; there was no choice but to embrace it. But embracing it did not mean tolerating all its worst features. Instead, Weber tried to determine how to live within the framework of modern rationality and yet

1. Max Weber, cited in Arthur Mitzman, *The Iron Cage: An Historical Interpretation of Max Weber* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Books, 1985), p. 178.

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check the ensuing fragmentation, alienation and "parcelling out of the soul." Especially in the last fifteen years of his life, Weber proposed a number of ways the human and spiritual dimensions of life might be rescued from "the cold, skeletal hand" of reason without altogether abandoning rationality. But there is no need to recount these alternatives here. The point of citing Weber is to show that in many respects his position *vis-à-vis* rationality in 1905 and my view of modernity in 1993 are very similar — and so are our solutions.

The Past in Ruins begins by focusing on three elements similar to those found in Weber's address. First (to change the order a bit), I point out several things that characterize modern social life. These are not much different from what Weber meant by the "parcelling-out of the soul." For example, among the characteristics of modernity which I mention are the erosion of the lifeworld, the atomization of experience, the disintegration of individual autonomy and subjectivity and the increasing normlessness of everyday life. I think all or most of the symposium commentators agree that these do in fact summarize some of today's central problems.

Second, I discuss why such problems exist in the first place. If they are the "effects," then it is important to ask what is their "cause." My rough answer is that the cause is *modernity*, which parallels Weber's notion of rationality but refers to a more encompassing set of processes. Because modernity — not traditionlessness — is the source of the problems, I never argue that a return to tradition must be construed as the solution. To call something a solution makes sense only when it is a *bona fide* response to the cause of the problem. But the apparent loss or thinning-out of tradition is not the cause here. Traditionlessness is rather a consequence of those larger forces linked to "modernity," specifically the new social and economic realities that have emerged and triumphed in the West since the 17th century. Some commentators misunderstood me in this regard, thinking I identified the "loss of tradition" as the problem and then argued for the restoration of tradition as the solution, but this is not what *The Past in Ruins* actually argues.

As I take modernity and not tradition to be the problem, I also take the view that something needs to be "set against" modernity without at the same time abandoning it. Or, as I put it in the book, we need to free ourselves from the worst aspects of modernity "while paradoxically remaining within the framework of modernity." This is an awkward position, but no other option seems viable. We have to accept the world as it is, and then question, challenge, combat it on its own terms. I reject the idea of going back to the past or restoring "the world we have lost." This approach to the problem of modernity, which in the book I refer to as "traditionalism," not only will not work, but it is not even desirable. (In this respect, John Michael's assertion that I appear to want a reinstatement of the "good homogeneity" of the past is far wide of the mark. Not only do I not want it, I do not believe it ever existed.) I likewise reject the idea of embracing modernity and then developing some sort of "ironic" or "playful" attitude toward it as one finds in postmodernism. Equally unacceptable is the

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notion of enriching modernity with more traditions, creating a greater amount of cultural heterogeneity, making life in modernity more palatable (at least through a richer diversity of "lifestyles").

As I regard these options as either unsatisfactory or counter-productive, there seems to be little that can be done other than follow Weber's "setting against" strategy. This means 1) endeavoring to keep alive fragments from destroyed or surpassed traditions which nevertheless have survived in discontinuous bits and pieces (e.g., abandoned preindustrial modes of thought and action, superseded codes of honor, ancient forms of spirituality, outmoded canons of ethics, seemingly lost styles of human relation and interaction, etc.); and also 2) striving to keep afloat, whole traditions (even those which, from a mainstream viewpoint, might seem uncongenial) *if* these traditions, when juxtaposed to the "givens" of modernity, have the effect of disturbing or unsettling present-day clichés and complacent elements or otherwise calling into question contemporary "normative orientations." In either preserving traces of faded or defeated traditions, or in folding surviving oppositional or adversarial traditions, the point would be to create some degree of *critical leverage* against what is now simply taken for granted. The result of such an exercise might be to shake up what is contemporaneous by means of a stark confrontation with what is non-contemporaneous. This may generate conflicts and produce critical insights opening up alternative ways of being and thinking which, because too often they have been seen as *aufgehoben*, they have not been readily available for consideration. Deborah Cook rightly points out that both Adorno and I are interested in experimenting with shock effects, but it is the "shock of the old" rather than the "shock of the new" that we are both drawn to.[2] Adorno's words are worth quoting in this regard: what is most "alive" in tradition may be that which is most anachronistic, i.e., that which was "left along the way, passed over or overpowered."[3]

Admittedly, there are at least a couple of problems with this position. Bringing forward tradition to challenge aspects of modernity that ought not to be ignored may play into the hands of the powers-that-be. The very difference that traditions represent in relation to modernity could provide the *raison d'etre* that existing institutions need to legitimize the social and political function they already have allocated to themselves — i.e., organizing, managing and containing "otherness." To dredge up "unhomogenized traditional residues" (even with critical intent) may be precisely what "the system" needs to sustain both its own internal control mechanisms and the prevailing normality which is the task of such mechanisms to uphold. This is the artificial negativity thesis, and there is much truth in it. Piccone makes a good case that this is precisely what has happened and is still happening with respect to multiculturalism.[4] The same thing could happen with the diachronic differences embodied in tradition. Possibly,

2. Deborah Cook, "Tradition and Critique," *Telos* 94 (Winter 1992-93), p. 31.
3. Theodor W. Adorno, "On Tradition," *Telos* 94 (Winter 1992-93), p. 80.
4. Paul Piccone, "The Actuality of Traditions," *Telos* 94 (Winter 1992-93), pp. 93-95.

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but possibly not. One never knows the effect a sharp insertion of otherness might have on any situation: it might be immediately assimilated, defused and rendered harmless, or it might so unsettle a community's *nomoi* and *ethoi* that it would be difficult for anyone to live the norms unreflectively any more, as might otherwise have been the case. Even if a critical appropriation of tradition did not in fact subvert whole patterns of life but merely made people (in Robert D'Amico's words) "more resilient, less manipulable by the cultural industry,"[5] it would be worth it, despite the calculated risk that it might all be for naught: the end result might simply be a shoring up of the *status quo*.

The other problem is that by speaking of the "uses" to which tradition might be put, it may seem to be an instrumentalization of tradition, i.e., valuing it not for what it is in itself but only for its critical potential. This kind of instrumentalization is exactly what I complain about in the book, describing how the state, the market and the culture industry exploit traditions or fragments thereof by "refunctioning" them for their own purposes. I realize that there are some superficial similarities between what I advocate and what I oppose, but this is unavoidable. The only way of *not* "using" tradition to some extent is by either refusing to deal with it altogether or by achieving such a fusion with it even after having once left it (a "second naiveté") that tradition literally becomes an unconscious part of one's self. I dismiss both these options, the first because it is undesirable and the second because it is probably impossible. Nevertheless, while acknowledging that the very idea of "using" or "refunctioning" tradition has its problems, there are important differences between how I would want to refunction the past and how the state, the market and the media actually do so today. To mention only two: I want to use tradition for critical purposes in order to raise questions about "what is," while the just-mentioned institutions want to use tradition to bolster and entrench "what is" (e.g., to promote political legitimation, corporate profits and the like). In the same vein, I want people to notice how far we have moved from the traditional past, and therefore how much alterity there is in former traditions, which means I want people to approach traditions cognitively, intelligently and thus fully consciously, whereas the market, the state and the culture industry would prefer that people approach traditions emotionally, sentimentally, nostalgically, even *un*consciously, to the extent that, when traditions are received and internalized through these latter modes, they are much easier to manage and manipulate.

By arguing for a "setting against" strategy, I opted for *one particular stance* toward modernity, i.e., critical challenge. Upon reading the symposium it is clear that this position is not the only one with merit. Without retracting what I wrote about reclaiming what modernity has marginalized or "transcended," clearly there are good reasons for complementing this approach with others equally valid and important. For example, Cook suggests that instead of merely using tradition for critical leverage, one might seek to explain the practical struggles

5. Robert D'Amico, "Problems with Traditions," *Telos* 94 (Winter 1992-93), p. 43.

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against the loss of tradition now occurring. If, Cook writes, "the loss of important elements of tradition is lived in the form of crises within everyday life . . . , then the standpoint of the particular, local and contextually-specific lived experiences of and active resistance to the disintegration of substantive norms should also be explored," since these too must contain some critical potential.[6] She is right. While we need to experience the shock of what has been occluded, surpassed or suppressed by modernity, we also need a phenomenology "of the normative frameworks of specific social groups or communities to determine what traditional elements have survived and the extent of their degradation due to their instrumentalization by the state and the media, as well as to other factors."[7]

Also worth considering is Luke's view that more traditions have survived than I acknowledge, not just at the margins or underground but at the center of society. Some of these traditions may yet be indispensable for any present or future "emancipatory political project," but for that to be so, a better understanding and appreciation is needed of exactly how such traditions constitute individuals and communities. This would require an approach different from mine, for the kind of critique I defended, based on juxtaposing non-contemporancity with contemporancity, might at best raise questions about what is given or shake up present-day certainities but it cannot (as Piccone correctly indicates) provide a qualitative alternative to the *status quo*.[8] John Michael makes a similar point by suggesting I have underestimated how many traditions have actually persisted into the present (he means "African, Asian, Latino and Native American" traditions). Because these are not "my" traditions, nor those generally favored by European Critical Theory, he thinks I have been blind to them and their critical potential. I do discuss some of these traditions briefly in *The Past in Ruins*, but it is true that they certainly need more attention than I have given them. Precisely because numerous ethnic and racial "histories, traditions and meanings" have been excluded from the dominant discourse, they may contain hitherto unheard or unseen elements of opposition. In this respect, Michael's comment is well taken: the relation between dominance and forgetting, tradition and opposition, does not have to be played out only on an historical axis, i.e., only between an apparently "lost" traditional past and an apparently traditionless present. It can also be seen to operate *within* the present, between those whose traditions and worldviews have been repressed and those who decide what officially-sanctioned consciousness is supposed to look like.[9]

We may well approach tradition in a variety of ways. What I proposed in *The Past in Ruins* is what makes most sense to me, but, as the *Telos* symposium demonstrates, it is not necessarily better than (nor does it exclude) other approaches.

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6. Cook, *op. cit.*, p. 35.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 35.
8. Paul Piccone, *op. cit.*, p. 102.
9. John Michael, "Tradition and the Critical Talent," *Telos* 94 (Winter 1992-93), pp. 59-60, 64-66.

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Reviews:

Green Hustlers: A Critique of Eco-Opportunism

Andrew McLaughlin, *Regarding Nature: Industrialism and Deep Ecology* (Albany, NY: State University of New York, 1993), 280 pp.
Al Gore, *Earth in the Balance: Ecology and the Human Spirit* (Boston: Houghton-Mifflin, 1992), 407 pp.
David Oates, *Ecological Belief in an Age of Science* (Corvalis, OR: Oregon State University Press, 1989), 255 pp.

Today there seem to be too many misguided opportunists who have become intent on making the world "a better place to live," in order to get themselves political power. Often these hustlers have no defensible vision of what the world actually is, how it could be improved, or why anything would be better off as a result of their actions. Nonetheless, they set out "into the environment" to make their improvements. Believing that they must do anything and everything to protect Nature, they transform environmental protection into a moral crusade. Their struggles, however, are hobbled by a fundamental lack of clarity about what the environment actually *is*, because the exact meaning of the "environment" remains elusive. This vagueness is intriguing because many of today's ecological debates articulate their radical alternative visions for political liberation by advancing solutions for "environmental problems." In other words, the ecological crisis becomes the hunting grounds of eco-opportunists, hustling Nature in search of power.

This tendency mars even the thinking of Barry Commoner, whose writing about environmental problems from the 1960s through the 1990s has motivated so many of today's misguided ecological reformers. In his most recent book, *Making Peace with the Planet*, Commoner never directly defines the concept of the environment; instead, he divides Nature into "two worlds: the natural ecosphere, the thin skin of air, water, and soil and the plants and animals that live in it, and the man-made technosphere," which now has become, "sufficiently large and intense to alter the natural processes that govern the ecosphere. And in turn, the altered ecosphere threatens to flood our great cities, dry up our bountiful farms, contaminate our food and water, and poison our bodies — catastrophically diminishing our ability to provide for basic

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human needs."[1] Commoner sees these two worlds "at war." As humans in the technosphere disrupt the ecosphere, the ecosphere responds with equally or more disruptive secondary effects in the technosphere. In some sense, the environment is "Nature" for Commoner, but it is also "Society," or, more accurately, nature-as-transformed-by-society. This interpretation is in keeping with his earlier formulations in *The Closing Circle* where he claims "the environment is, so to speak, the house created on the earth *by* living things, *for* living things."[2] His presentation of the environment as life's house, however, does little more than reduce it to a setting that surrounds organisms.

Still, Commoner's metaphor is not useless in as much as it invites us to return to the initial meaning of the environment. The concept first enters English from Old French, and originally it was related to strategic action. An environment was the state of being produced by a verb: "to environ." And, environing as a verb means to enclose or encircle. It suggests the physical activity of surrounding something. Its various uses even indicate stationing guards around, thronging with hostile intent, or standing watch over some person or place. To environ a place or a person is to beset, beleaguer or beseige it.

Given this understanding of "the environment," today's eco-opportunism can now be better understood. An environmental act, in a sense, is already an instrumental maneuver, aiming to delimit some expanse in nature in order to control it. Within these contexts, in turn, administrative, engineering or scientific expertise then can arm well-intentioned environmentalists, who stand watch over such surroundings. Enveloped within these theoretical frameworks, environed spaces then can be moved forcibly to meet new administrative targets laid out in economic plans, managerial directives, and professional agendas.

This more fundamentalist reading of "the environment" is much closer to

1. See Barry Commoner, *Making Peace with the Planet* (New York: Pantheon, 1990), p. 7. For extensive discussions of environmentalism, see Samuel P. Hays, *Beauty, Health, and Permanence: Environmental Politics in the United States, 1955-1985* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987); and Philip Shabecoff, *A Fierce Green Fire: The American Environmental Movement* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1993). See also, Penelope Revelle and Charles Revelle, *The Environment: Issues and Choices* (Boston: Jones and Barrett, 1988); and Eugene Buchholz, *Principles in Environmental Management: The Greening of Business* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1993); Bernard J. Nebel, *Environmental Science: The Way the World Works* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1990); Anna Bramwell, *Ecology in the 20th Century: A History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989); Robert Paehlke, *Environmentalism and the Future of Progressive Politics* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989); Max Oelschalaeger, *The Idea of Wilderness: From Prehistory to the Age of Ecology* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991); Robyn Eckersley, *Environmentalism and Political Theory: Toward an Ecocentric Approach* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1992); Bill Devall and George Sessions, *Deep Ecology: Living As If Nature Mattered* (Salt Lake City: Peregrine Smith, 1985); Warwick Fox, *Toward a Transpersonal Ecology: Developing New Foundations for Environmentalism* (Boston: Shambhala, 1990); Roderick Nash, *Wilderness and the American Mind*, Third Ed. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982); and Roderick Nash, *The Rights of Nature: A History of Environmental Ethics* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1989).

2. Barry Commoner, *The Closing Circle* (New York: Knopf, 1971), p. 32.

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the opportunistic intentions of many contemporary environmentalists. Simply by being named, "the environment" is already transformed into "natural resources" for human exploitation. Once its natural complexities are so reduced, the intellectual apparatus behind their reduction can legitimate a variety of hidden social agendas, ranging from everyday bureaucratic meddling to extraordinary technocratic authoritarianism. The three books by Andrew McLaughlin, Al Gore, and David Oates are typical examples of this state of affairs.

Ecology as Identity and Community

Like many academics, McLaughlin is either unable or unwilling "to call a spade, a spade." Consequently, his ecological critique does not begin with an analysis of the struggle for wealth and power but with a discussion of the struggle for "personal identity." Because today we are "fundamentally insecure," "consumerism" becomes a quest "to relieve this insecurity and vulnerability by providing a feeling of strength through our possessions" (78). However, the logic of planned obsolescence and the productivity of technology guarantee that these possessions will create new insecurities and vulnerabilities with new feelings of inadequacy. Meanwhile, nature is plundered to provide the material wherewithal to drive this system, causing society to become "a psychologically frustrating and ecologically lethal mode of forming personal identity" (79).

These linkages become the nub of industrial society's most basic flaws. If personal identity lies at the heart of a consumerism that justifies an expanding industrialism, then any attempt to create an ecologically sound social philosophy must address the processes of personal identity formation. McLaughlin endorses deep ecology as the core of a new identity politics (172) since deep ecology focuses on developing "life quality" instead of seeking "an increasingly higher standard of living." This allegedly higher quality of life will entail creating "sustainable communities" with much smaller populations living beyond "the mindless quest for growth" (184). These changes will add to "vitality and joy," lead to "an increase in happiness," and prove that the prevailing systems of labor and consumption are "chronically unsatisfying" (184).

At this juncture, McLaughlin stumbles into a swamp of confusion. Following Marshall Sahlin's observations about affluence, i.e., that material wants can be easily satisfied either by producing much or desiring little, McLaughlin uncritically claims that consumers will follow deep ecologists in choosing the latter over the former, bucking nearly two centuries of evidence to the contrary. The key question is "whether we can move forward toward a society that chooses a course of affluence by desiring less or whether we are compelled to continue the fruitless search for satisfaction through the relentless pursuit of industrial products" (80). Because the latter is ecologically unsustainable, deep ecology naively believes that the former becomes politically necessary. Here is the bog McLaughlin falls into: on the one hand consumerism may be ecologically unsustainable but, on the other, the voluntary simplicity advocated by deep ecologists is neither politically necessary nor socially acceptable.

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McLaughlin is right about protesting against mindless consumption, but he is all wrong about how to correct the problem.

On one level, deep ecology advocates the "transformation of the masses into a new kind of society," but it has continually avoided developing any coherent strategies for this transformation.[3] Instead, deep ecology unfolds primarily as "a spiritual-religious movement."[4] Consequently, the transformation of the masses either becomes a spiritual journey of inner personal change or it befalls state agencies to ascribe a new identity to their clients by encouraging them to own less, do little and have fewer children. Along with most deep ecologists, McLaughlin ignores the productive dynamics of power. While he claims "the existing patterns of labor and consumption" are "chronically unsatisfying" because they embed personal identity in consumerism, he misses the larger picture. Power does not simply prevent otherwise morally good, easily satisfiable, and fully ecological people from being environmentally sound by entrapping them with consumer goods. Power generates codes of subjectivity and models of identity that are environmentally unsound, but also personally rewarding and socially satisfying. Otherwise, when environmental catastrophes such as the January 1994 Los Angeles earthquake occur, why do these chronically unsatisfied people not turn their backs on their TVs, washers, dryers, VCRs, and supermarket foods to live more sustainable lives in tents out on the land? Actually, most people are very satisfied with the comforts of industrial society, and many others would be quite dissatisfied with an identity not tied to having more consumer goods. Some people are aware that the disciplinary grid of industrial living —working, consuming, playing, commuting, learning, communicating — is itself ecologically unsustainable. Yet only very few are willing to have less, do less, and own less *voluntarily*.

McLaughlin's analysis of ecological ethics simply transforms correct ecological thinking into the latest form of multiculturalism, where the object of correct reasoning is to avoid anthropocentrism, at the heart of which McLaughlin finds industrialism: it is "the hub of a set of social practices that are destructive to the rest of nature" (172). In his vision of the environment, "an ecologically based understanding of humanity that locates us *within* a community of communities composed of various centers of life, suggests that limiting concern to only human concerns is an undue, unjustified, and illegitimate bias, akin to the biases of racism and sexism" (152). At the same time, he is unwilling to quibble over the particular ethical implications of taking this peculiar stand, because ethical theory is always "methodologically confined to developing and explicating currently dominant conceptions of what is moral and immoral" (169). Because all ethical theory is entangled within the rights and wrongs of

3. Bill Devall, *Simple in Means, Rich in Ends: Practicing Deep Ecology* (Salt Lake City: Peregrine Smith, 1988), p. 178.

4. *Ibid.*, p. 160. For an extensive review of deep ecology's politics, see Tim Luke, "The Dreams of Deep Ecology," *Telos* 76 (Summer 1988), pp. 65-92.

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industrial society, "any radical transformation of humanity's relations with the rest of nature requires going far beyond ordinary ethical discourse" (169). To transcend these limitations, McLaughlin tags deep ecology as the necessary transformative means for creating a new society which could then midwife his new ethics. Most significantly, he suggests that "an inclusive ecological ideology of nature would not legitimate the domination of nonhuman nature," but apparently it would legitimate sharply decreasing the human population of the planet in order to protect "the right to life" of trees, frogs, and rivers (151).

Leaving McLaughlin at this juncture, he would stand out merely as another academic crank, raging about the psychic inadequacy or ecological unviability he apparently feels in his relatively privileged material existence. By inviting his fellow human beings not to put their interests above those of other life forms which provide them with food, fiber or fuel, he voluntarily joins a small "spiritual-religious movement" in deep ecology to gain some badly needed identity. If, however, others seriously heed his multicultural pleas to be post-anthropocentric by inviting state power to bring the vitality and joy of such deep ecological policies to everyone as bureaucratically-imposed involuntary simplicity, then there could be trouble. And, in this vein, none other than the Vice President of the United States, Al Gore, has been taken with such talk about "an inclusive ecological ideology of nature" (151).

An Environmentalism of the Spirit

The same identity politics that clicks in McLaughlin's endorsement of deep ecology also surfaces in Al Gore's environmental musings. On one level, Gore argues that "the task of restoring the natural balance of the Earth's ecological system" could reaffirm America's longstanding "interest in social justice, democratic government, and free market economics" (270). As an identifying practice, ecology might even be seen as "a renewed dedication to what Jefferson believed were not merely American but universal inalienable rights: life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness" (270). At another level, however, Gore takes the spiritual-religious engagement of McLaughlin's wishy-washy deep ecology to new heights, arguing that America's new strategic goals after the Cold War are to reestablish "a natural and healthy relationship between human beings and the earth," replacing the brutal exploitation of Nature with an "environmentalism of the spirit" (218, 238).

The Vice-Pesident confidently asserts that industrial civilization, like all organized cultures, depends on "a web of stories" to explain what it is, where it is going, why it exists. Industrialism's stories, however, are riddled with the themes of instrumental rationality, mindless growth, and possessive individualism. They have led to the destruction of nature. Thus "new stories about the meaning and purpose of human civilization" must be devised (216). To tell his new story, Gore turns to the parlance of psychobabble, labelling advanced industrial societies as a "dysfunctional civilization," rooted in big science, instrumental rationality, capitalist greed, industrial alienation and growth mania. Its

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most basic cause, however, is a growing addiction to mass consumption. Because we (meaning everyone in advanced industrial society) allegedly have lost direct contact with the natural world, we are "addicted to the consumption of the earth itself" (220). Lonely, empty, and obsessive, everyone attempts to fill this void with the inauthentic surrogates of more consumer goods. Thus we become biosphere abusers. Unlike McLaughlin, Gore does not call for going cold turkey from the mall to the authenticity of Nature's harmonies. Instead, as with all addicted individuals or any dysfunctional family, he argues that we are in denial. But he assures us there is no denying we must and fortunately can heal ourselves.

As with the endless succession of wackos that Phil Donahue, Oprah or Maury Povich display every day in national TV syndication, everyone must realize that "the key to change is the harsh light of truth" (236). As planetary perverts or consumption fetishists, everyone must, as Gore's stable of psychological experts put it, begin to feel the burning agonies that our industrialized pleasures inflict on Mother Earth. When ordinary consumers return to "the original loss," while at the same time, attempting to consciously feel the pain their dysfunctionality causes the Earth, these absolutions "can heal the wound and free the victim from further enslavement" (236). In a dysfunctional civilization, rationality is inadequate. What is needed instead is a new therapeutic script for escaping irrationality. Sensing the mass public's anxious need for such rough-and-ready redemption, Gore brands everyone as a dysfunctional deviant, identifies the causes of common neuroses, and provides the latest cure needed to realize collective salvation, i.e., "the new story of what it means to be a steward of the earth" (237).

Old narratives wrongly divided fact and value, cause and effect, faith and reason, causing dysfunctionality. Something else is needed now. So Gore turns to new pantheistic or animistic tales for his curative ontology: "It is my own belief that the image of God can be seen in every corner of creation, even in us, but only faintly. By gathering in the mind's eye all of creation, one can perceive the image of the Creator vividly" (265). Yet, Gore is no medieval mystic, seeking to glimpse God with the unaided eye of pure faith. On the contrary, this New Age epiphany is hi-tech. Just as "when one looks not at a small portion but at the entire hologram," there are "thousands of tiny, faint images" that come together "in the eye of the beholder as a single large, vivid image," so too are "the myriad slight strands from earth's web of life — woven so distinctively into our essence — that make up the 'resistance pattern' that reflects the image of God, faintly. By experiencing nature in its fullest —our own and that of all creation — with our senses and with our spiritual imagination, we can glimpse, bright shining as the sun; the infinite image of God" (265).

Having gathered all of humanity, creation and divinity into his mind's eye, Gore's spiritual imagination taps out an environmental hologram whose dots and dashes unfortunately only rehash a well-known story in their multi-stranded resistance pattern. The spirit of environmentalism that can restrike the balance

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of Nature will need to take on a material embodiment to succeed. Here Gore's new story of earth stewardship takes an amazing turn as he identifies contemporary dysfunctional industrial civilization with the fascist and communist threats of WWII and the Cold War. "Then, as now, the real enemy was a dysfunctional way of thinking" (274). Thus "totalitarianism" is compared to today's new-fangled, bad "consumptionism." According to Gore: "In Nazi Germany, dysfunctional thinking was institutionalized in the totalitarian state, its dogma, and its war machine. Today, a different dysfunction takes the form of ravenous, insatiable consumption, its dogma, and the mechanisms by which ever more resources are obtained. Totalitarianism and consumptionism have led to crises peculiar to advanced industrial civilization: both are examples of alienation and technology run amok. Just as totalitarianism collapses individuals into 'the state,' the new ideology of consumption collapses individuals into the desire for what they consume, even as it fosters the assumption that we are separate from the earth. It is this strange and destructive way of thinking about our relationship to the physical world that is our real enemy. The struggle to save the global environment is in one way much more difficult than the struggle to vanquish Hitler, for this time the war is with ourselves" (274-275). This effort to identify yesterday's dysfunctional Nazi storm troopers with today's dysfunctional suburban Wal-Mart shoppers is a tough reach, but Gore needs the linkage to pursue the WWII theme in his story.

To win this new global war, Gore also claims that there is only one workable model for guiding today's titanic struggle against "alienation and technology run amok": the Marshall Plan. According to Gore, in that historic program several nations joined together "to reorganize an entire region of the world and change its way of life" (296). Like the Marshall Plan, Gore's Global Marshall Plan must (strangely for a design dedicated to environmental spiritual renewal) "focus on strategic goals and emphasize actions and programs that are likely to remove the bottlenecks presently inhibiting the healthy functioning of the global economy . . . to serve human needs and promote sustained economic progress" (297). Just as the Marshall Plan of old picked up and dusted off dysfunctional fascist totalitarians and put them to work in American-planned liberal democratic capitalism, so now must a new Global Marshall Plan round up and retrain dysfunctional suburban consumptionists and put them to work in a new American-planned spiritual green capitalism. Regrettably, "sustainable development" here really means finding ways of sustaining the economy on a global scale rather than sustaining the Earth's ecology at some more optimal natural balance. Technosphere plus biosphere in this ecological vision equals marketsphere.

Preserving the earth's natural ecology, then, is not Gore's real goal. The Global Marshall Plan actually provides a global agenda for environmentalization. Adopting this instrument as a central organizing principle "means embarking on an all-out effort to use every policy and program, every law and institution, every treaty and alliance, every tactic and strategy, every plan and course of action — to use, in short, every means to halt the destruction of the

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environment and to preserve and nurture our ecological system" (274). This "ecological system" is the global business environment as well as the world's natural environment. Both, however, will be destroyed by unchecked growth, mindless consumption, dysfunctional development, and obsessive accumulation if they are allowed to continue. Both can be saved by global planning for environmentally appropriate growth, mindful consumption, sustainable development, and careful accumulation guided by a spiritual environmentalism coordinated through Washington, D.C.

While Gore pushes all of the politically correct buttons in the effort to rectify regional, class, gender, racial, and hemispheric inequalities, he still rests his entire strategy on centralized bureaucratic solutions that have failed on a national level and that are even less likely to work on a global scale. His designs outline a six-point course of action that would necessitate: 1) stabilizing the world population; 2) deploying appropriate technologies; 3) devising techniques of ecological accounting to audit the production of all economic "goods" and ecological "bads"; 4) imposing new regulatory frameworks to make sure the plan succeeds; 5) re-educating the global populace about environmental necessities; and, 6) establishing models of sustainable development. McLaughlin's anxious quest for identity and community pales beside this program, which can provide the new "central organizing principle" to replace the lost sense of purpose and unity once provided by the Cold War era's struggle against communism or the fight against fascism during WWII.

Casting all of those dysfunctional consumerists who remain silent and supportive of unchecked development as corrupt quislings, while praising the resistance of each of those environmentalists of the spirit, who oppose mindless growth as a green underground, Gore openly endorses American intervention to aid any and all who "are standing in the path of destruction," recognizing only "this time we are invading ourselves and attacking the ecological system of which we are a part" (294). Because there are no other institutional entities — the UN, OECD, or NATO — with the muscle to perform the heavy lifting needed in managing the global environment after this self-invasion is over, "the responsibility for taking the initiative, for innovating, catalyzing, and leading such an effort, falls disproportionately on the United States" (304). At the end of the Cold War, we cannot simply show the interventionist central bureaucracies the door to retirement. On the contrary, we must bring the state back in. Only now, the bureaucrats will be green.

From Sustainability to Survival

Like many government bureaucrats, David Oates begins with a simple insight: "right thinking precedes right action" (148). Since advanced industrial societies cling to flawed ideas — liberalism, progress, rationalism, growth, egoism, competitiveness, individualism — that can only result in wrong action, it is necessary to find better ideological alternatives, which Oates believes can be discovered in "an ecological ethics," i.e., in a "healthy comprehension of the

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meaning of nature, of the inescapable network of natural interdependence." Such ideas "would result in a sane reaction to the problems of worldwide pollution, waste of resources, overpopulation, species extinction, and so forth. . . . The human and natural world can no longer afford the luxury of selfish and narrow ideas. For it turns out that ideas — values, beliefs, definitions of ourselves and nature — are part of the ecosystem" (146-147). "Right Thinking" and "Wrong Thinking," then, are naturalized by embedding both sets of reasoning in the inner workings of the earth's ecology. Humans engaged in right thinking ecological action would resonate with nature's immanent harmonies, discovering "an inner guide, a secure sense of balance and timing, action and stillness," while humans enmeshed with wrong thinking ecological action unwisely diverge from Nature's intrinsic order, clinging to "their crazy notion that they can destroy nature without destroying themselves" (148, 146).

With these rhetorical flourishes, Oates propounds an ecological ethics that rests "on the notion that the human and the natural coincide. And so the basis of value must be liberal and sound, truthful to the facts of natural life as science relates them" (150). Having enlisted the deep structures of Nature as definitive guides of right and wrong, and having identified science as the most truthful means of decoding these rights and wrongs, Oates makes a simple, if dangerous, claim to ground his ethico-political project of ecological renewal. His reading of "ecological thinkers" reveals that they have found "an intrinsic value in biology to build a realistic ethic of life on earth. Their near-unanimous conclusion is that the sciences of life do indeed enable us to find — not invent — a basis for ethical value in the nature of life itself. That basic value is *survival*. Survival is the master concept of all life forms" (150). Realizing the harshness of this claim, he qualifies it by assuring the reader that his "survival ethic" is *not* a new Darwinian reading of nature; instead, "it places the individual within his or her many contexts, and seeks well-being in the most comprehensive sense" (151).

A survivalist understanding of Nature by science and the state transforms it into "environments," or elaborate natural systems of such complexity, diversity, instability and connectivity that no one person, scientific discipline or society can adequately comprehend them. Discussing "Nature" in ordinary language as a localized cultural setting, a particular biophysical site or a regional social ecology, then, disappears into more arcane discussions of environmental complexities conducted in formal scientific disciplines about "the environment" as an elaborate global metasystem. At the same time, this process of environmentalizing Nature reduces the raw, unknown otherness of "nature" to sets of purportedly rational, knowable relations that can be defined, disciplined and dealt with by administrative fiat guided by instrumental science. In the pictures provided by such systems theory, inorganic nature is reduced to the metereological, geological and oceanographic hardware of the physical environment with its own immanent cybernetic cycles, and organic nature is transformed into an elaborate ensemble of biological wetware informatically interacting in formats

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set down in the codes of DNA, photosynthesis, and range ecology.

This project of environmentalizing rationality articulates all of the key assumptions needed for a new bureaucratic green state formation intent upon Global Marshall Planning. Nature is seen not in the communal terms of immediate ecosocial settings or bioregional diversity, but rather in accord with the findings presented by "the life sciences." These positive scientific projects, "find" rather than "invent" a basis for ethical value in a new master concept: *survival*. Master concepts, however, are our rhetorical introduction to new groups of "master conceptualizers" in green bureaucracies who must be trusted to engage in right thinking and right acting as "environmental protection agents" in the administrative search for ecological well-being.

Oates obviously is not pushing a survivalist agenda for "the here-and-now" of every individual fighting to protect "the me-and-mine." Survival is much more; indeed, it is the crux of defining a new time and space for the state's social control beyond mere sovereignty over "territory" in the expanses of sustainability in "the environment." Here environmentalism, conducted in accord with an environmentalizing regime's master concept of survival, accepts "the more genuine biological perspective on survival: the twin considerations of an organism's fitness and the environment's health. Both must be continually upheld for 'survival' to have any biological meaning. . . . into future generations, and throughout the ecosphere, and for all those other organisms on whose lives ours depend. The ecological perspective is long and wide — it concerns all of us, here, forever" (151).

The "discovery" of such time-frames, spatial-realms, and population-groups in Oates' scientifically-grounded ecological ethics also empowers green bureaucrats to police the fitness of organisms and the health of environments from within the state apparatus not only now but for all time. Not only will the state conduct elaborate biological surveys of all existing plant and animal species, it also sets out to map the entire genome of many species' DNA codes. On one level, these values can be undeniably important for safeguarding all living beings on the earth. Yet, on another level, combining these concerns with entrenched state power can create an interventionist regime dedicated to a disciplinary surveillance beyond the widest reach or wildest dreams of 20th century totalitarianism. Guaranteeing the grasp of "a master concept," like survival or sustainability, empowers green bureaucrats — as the scientifically legitimated master conceptualizers — to reinscribe the existing cultural/economic/territorial order of the planet as an elaborate array of "environments" requiring constant supervision to be made safe for survival and sustainability. As Oates claims, the survival agenda of fitness and health "applies simultaneously to individuals, populations, communities and ecosystems; and it applies simultaneously to the present and the future" (151).

What once were relatively free and unregulated places in the private sphere are now transformed through such writs of environmentalization into dimensions of domination and spaces of surveillance. For an example, one only needs to go

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home. No one's home any longer is their castle; instead, it becomes a danger zone or crime scene open to constant inspection by environmentalists. Because of technological practices or social customs that have prevailed historically, the built environment of the home, which supposedly is everyone's haven in a heartless world, can be discovered now to be toxic waste dumps, depending on what levels of risk are deemed hazardous. Even though the various risk factors may be questionable, the suspected or actual presence of asbestos, radon, or toxic emissions from building materials in "the home environment" provides innumerable pretexts for bureaucratic intervention into everyday life. By the same token, the impetus to manage new environmental spaces moves the state to impose new codes of control over public and private space relating to insulation standards, lighting energy usage, aesthetic zoning, flood plain development, handicapped accessibility, earthquake survival standards, fire prevention, interior decorating materials, or, even, potty parity. Buildings are no longer simply spatial enclosures put to various free uses in civil society; instead, they constitute potentially hazardous formations in the built environment that must be reconstructed around the regulatory requirements of green bureaucracies. And, the once free use of these spaces is transformed into a set of health-sustaining or health-threatening routines that established authorities empower themselves to police for everyone's continued safety and security.

This command to go anywhere at anytime to defend the cause of survival also directs green bureaucracies to pursue other equally problematic interventions on a more global level with the full force of state power and positive science. The state is no longer empowered simply to defend its territory to protect its populations. Now it also must identify and police all of its many environments to guarantee ecological stability, biological diversity and environmental interdependence. Because some states are more sustainable than others, their survival imperatives can become guidelines for environmental colonialism. To survive, the state may choose to designate as green belts, forest preserves, nature reservations, or environmental refuges large chunks of territory of other societies. To serve and protect the values of the ecosystem, Oates claims the ecological ethic of stability as "a steady-state" would not result in "stagnation." Such outcomes would, of course, offend the growth-fixations of consumers and citizens living in liberal capitalist democracies. On the contrary, he believes it would mean "directing growth and change in nondestructive ways, generated within the standing pattern that supports life" (152). But, who directs growth and change for whom? Is there a standing pattern that directs life? Does anyone really know enough about it to direct growth in accordance with it? In practice, Global Marshall Planners in Washington or New York can use ecological criteria to determine sustainable economic growth at home as they also force ecological steady-states upon others abroad. If India's millions stay on foot or bicycles, then Germany's millions would stay in their cars. If Indonesia keeps growing trees, then Japan can keep consuming lumber. If Brazil's ranchers keep turning rain forest into cattle ranges, then America's suburbanites

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might continue eating their cheeseburgers.

Obviously a "steadying state," designed and managed by green bureaucrats, will be needed to enforce environmentalized stable states of dynamic ecological equilibrium, which Oates identifies as the *sine qua non* of stability. Ironically, then, green bureaucrats, directed to stabilize everyone's fitness and health, should restructure "populations and growth" by planning for sustainable patterns in timber harvesting, oil production, agricultural output, land use and consumer marketing to contain but not end the growth fetishism of mass consumption capitalism. Oates concurs with McLaughlin and Gore that all consumer-oriented economies run on a paradox: "whatever is achieved instantly becomes inadequate when measured against the ethic of continual consumption. Satisfaction only creates dissatisfaction, in an accelerating cycle. 'More' is an unrealizable goal" (155). Since these consumerist values continually cause more and more damage, the environmentalizing strategies of green bureaucrats must enforce a new social commitment to their opposites, i.e., the willing acceptance of "less" as the moral basis for new ecological values. For survival's sake, "the ethical consciousness of the earth's population must therefore be as ecologically well regulated as the size of the earth's population" (154).

The environmentalizing state also must enforce McLaughlin's anti-anthropocentric acceptance of diversity armed with an awareness of interdependence within the dynamic equilibrium of its environmental order. Diversity is intrinsically good, because it supposedly leads to greater complexity, heterogeneity and quality in the stability of steady-state ecologies. But, ultimately, it "can also be denominated as *order*" (157). Interdependence is also intrinsically good, since it promotes oddity, peculiarity and uniqueness in the community of states. Nevertheless, in the last analysis, it too makes connections "in which all the living parts contribute to the whole," forming a sense of "a common good which binds opposites together" (158). Thus individual and group ends can be "harmonized" in the ecological ethic of survival as bureaucratic greens are granted a constitutional mandate for defending the superorganismic order of state environments. Oates invites the inhabitants of such states to force themselves to be free by embracing the master concepts of survival and/or sustainability. Bureaucratic greens will handle any conflicts with two rules: "First, by allowing maximal latitude and tolerance. And, second, by shaping that latitude to stay within biological necessity. When ethical limits are felt not to be arbitrary, but to be a part of the very life process itself, then a high degree of voluntary accord is possible. A serious commitment to life-as-it-really-is draws the ecological diversity into a substantial unity" (160). The policing of life-as-it-really-is becomes another affirmative action problem. Real ecological diversity now is only apparent; it must be transformed into real multicentric interdependence through a substantive institutional unity made possible by the environmentalized state's enforcement of green steady-states.

Protecting the whole, in the practice of environmentalizing green bureaucracies, can also become a strange administrative credo of *biophilia* (love of life)

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in a framework of *biocentrism* (placing earth-life-nature beyond anthropocentrism at the core of green thought and bureaucratic practice). If environments are to be protected, then all life within them would, of course, anchor the practical forms of engagement with the world. Yet this emotional commitment to "life" entails a condemnation of humanity in open *misanthropy* by containing, destroying or limiting traditional forms of living in favor of the earth's ecological survival. It is not that green bureaucrats love their lives less, but that they love other animal and plant life more. They have no qualms about placing limits on human life's diversity and individuality when they see everyday social policies threatening non-human life's survival and stability. The master conceptualizers are empowered to determine what the threats are, whose survival is menaced, why stability is endangered, and where protective intervention is appropriate. "Where survival of the whole seems threatened," Oates concludes, "as in issues of extinction and pollution, then the basic ethos of protecting the whole predominates" (163).

Beyond Bureaucratic Greens

The green state is not an improvement over the welfare state. It simply places welfare states on an ecological footing and redeputizes their administrative personnel as bureaucratic greens. Because consumers are participants in a dysfunctional civilization not yet subject to full-blown ecological regulation, they must be coerced to accept mandates of environmentalizing bureaucracies. New identities built around ecological ends, such as survival or sustainability, thus can be elaborated beyond the consumerist persona that is the foundation of the alleged dysfunctionality. McLaughlin, Gore and Oates urge state power to counter dysfunctionality with environmentality.

Inasmuch as government techniques are the central focus of political struggle today, the complex interactions of populations with their surroundings are forcing states to redefine what falls within their competence. To survive now, environmentalizing advocates argue, it is not enough for states merely to maintain legal jurisdiction over their allegedly sovereign territories. As new limits to growth are either discovered or redefined, states are forced to guarantee their populations' productivity in all environmental settings. Rationally, managing the technosphere demands prudent administration of the biosphere to insure sustainable development in the marketsphere.

Bureaucracies methodically mobilize particular assumptions, codes and procedures to enforce specific understandings about the economy and society. Ecological ethics about earth in the balance, as McLaughlin, Gore and Oates show, will work just fine. Indeed, they can generate new administrative "truths" or managerial "knowledges" that will denominate codes of power with significant reserves of popular legitimacy. Inasmuch as they classify, organize and legitimate larger understandings of ecological reality, these bureaucracies can authorize or invalidate the options for constructing particular institutions, practices or concepts. They simultaneously frame the emergence of new collective

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subjects (global ecologies as dynamic bioeconomic systems) and collections of subjects (individuals as bioeconomic units in such global systems) to protect the environment. Still, the meaning of ecological subjectivity remains unclear. It is not simply a limited set of frozen roles constrained by coercive actions, but rather a free space of coaligned intellectual and material forces producing certain social possibilities. Ecological subjectivity can be expressed in political experiments by autonomous human beings following localistic social agendas in many small bioregional communities or it may be retooled in statist programs for post-anthropocentric human organisms interacting within Global Marshall Plans, depending upon which interpretations are empowered where.[5]

McLaughlin's, Gore's and Oates' environmentalism is simply a smokescreen for New Class empowerment and communal disempowerment. It must be resisted by means of real alternative visions based on localism, bioregionalism, and federalism. The bureaucratic greens' politics of conservation is centered on conserving state power as much as sustaining ecological balances in the ecosystem. Despite their pretensions of ecological omnicompetence, green bureaucracies are often too far away and too much removed from almost every particular bioregional setting to be helpful at safeguarding the "environmental security" of most actually existing communities.[6] Instead of new justifications for environmentalizing state policies, these communities need the freedom and resources to embed their economies and societies in their ecological localities while working against imposing other environmental costs on their surrounding bioregional settings.[7] This is the only way in which a popular environmentalism from below, nested within particular ecological contexts, will ever be able to realize real social justice, actual democratic government and workable free exchange.

Tim Luke

5. See Tim Luke, "Community and Ecology," *Telos* 88 (Summer 1991), pp. 62-72.

6. For another essentially statist explanation of why state power must guarantee environmental security, see Norman Myers, *Ultimate Security: The Environmental Basis of Political Stability* (New York: Norton, 1993).

7. See Kirkpatrick Sale, *Dwellers in the Land: The Bioregional Vision* (Philadelphia: New Society Publishers, 1991); and Murray Bookchin, *Remaking Society: Pathways to a Green Future* (Boston: South End Press, 1990).

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Anatomy of an Apology

Stephen Holmes, *The Anatomy of Antiliberalism* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993), 330 + XVI pp., $12.95.

Stephen Holmes' anthology provides the paper trail for a remarkably successful academic career. Despite his meager output of mostly journalistic essays on Hobbes, Schmitt, and Leo Strauss, his star rose early and brilliantly. By his early forties Holmes was full professor at the University of Chicago, teaching in the law school and in several graduate departments. His success may be partly attributable to his zeal and persistence in defending a single cause. He maintains that the US government and US culture, based on the premise of individual autonomy, are somehow at risk. Allegedly, American liberalism is under assault from communitarian thinkers who do not believe in individual liberty. Some are on the Left, others on the Right, but all are thought to bear a family resemblance to "fascist philosophers whose rhetoric is often indistinguishable from their own" (XIV).

Holmes argues that critics of liberalism have grossly misrepresented the liberal tradition. They have created polemical weapons that can be and have been turned against a supposed straw man. They try to reduce liberal thought to disagreeable characteristics that no decent or reasoning person could accept; e.g., possessive individualism, vague universalism, the rejection of social bonds and contempt for all custom. Antiliberals place all these characteristics at the doorstep of recognizably liberal thinkers and self-described liberal societies. By developing two arguments, Holmes sets out to reclaim the liberal legacy for a generation he believes has been confused if not corrupted by antiliberal influences. One, the antiliberals, or at least those he cites, do not present the other side fairly. They quote liberals selectively, without presenting the full context, historical and conceptual, out of which their systems of thought arose. Two: antiliberals make their own side appear better than it actually is. They exaggerate the virtues of pre- or antiliberal societies; and they claim for their own position concreteness and historical foundations that are largely imaginary.

Holmes is worried that red fascists and brown communists are making cultural inroads in the US. Under the influence of Christopher Lasch, Alasdair MacIntyre, Carl Schmitt, and Joseph de Maistre, antiliberalism has apparently become a powerful force. The difficulty of interesting American readers in the German jurist Schmitt is well known. Yet Holmes claims that Schmitt's ideas are spreading rapidly among intellectuals. The European authoritarian Right is setting a "communitarian trap" from which Holmes[1] would like to protect

1. See *The New Republic* (August 22, 1988), pp. 33-36.

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Americans (37-50).

In pursuit of his crusade, Holmes takes liberty with both facts and texts. A case in point is his treatment of Schmitt's career. His hasty judgments on this matter drew critical comment when the relevant essay first appeared.[2] Holmes, however, never condescended to respond. In *The Anatomy of Liberalism* he insists once again that Schmitt's defection to the Nazis in May 1933 was related to his critiques of German parliamentarianism published in the 1920s. Left out of the account are Schmitt's unmistakable attacks on the Nazis, particularly in 1931 and 1932, often made in the context of criticizing a weak parliamentary government. In January 1933, when Hitler came to power, Schmitt had a well-deserved reputation as an enemy of the Nazis as well as an antiliberal. As late as January 1933 Schmitt's correspondance is full of foreboding about his and Germany's possible fates under a Nazi regime. His critique of parliamentary liberalism does not help explain his later capitulation. Furthermore, contrary to Holmes' claims (50), during the Weimar Republic Schmitt was not associated with the revolutionary Right: he was an advisor to the Catholic Center Party which the Nazis attacked.

A few more corrections may be in order. Schmitt was not being "perverse" in distinguishing democratic homogeneity from liberal pluralism. Rather, he was developing a profound insight already found in Rousseau's *Social Contract*. Holmes is right to point out that although Schmitt criticized liberal democracy as an "enfeebling force," he had "presumably not forgotten who won the First World War." Unlike Holmes, however, Schmitt was aware of the fact that Jacobin France and even Wilsonian America practiced fewer liberal amenities in winning the war than Imperial Germany did in losing it. French and American jails were full of pacifists and other people deemed insufficiently bellicose. Finally, Holmes should document his claim that Schmitt was a cultural anti-Semite "long before 1933" (50). The references that he cites from *Political Theology* are inconclusive.

Even more curious is why Holmes believes that Americans are taking Schmitt's ideas seriously: that swarms of intellectuals are upholding organic democracy against liberal notions of individual gratification, or that hierarchical, communal modes of thinking are replacing the doctrine of individual rights. Holmes' references to Lasch, MacIntyre, and Strauss do not show that Americans, or even a significant number of professors and journalists, have embraced European conterrevolutionary thought. Holmes must live in some other country. Today in the US the media, mass news magazines, and most of the political class are clamoring for rights for women and gays; the "conservative" *Wall Street Journal* advocates "open borders" between the US and Mexico; and the self-proclaimed disciples of Leo Strauss, on whom Holmes confers a Maistream

2. See my response to Holmes' *Zerrbild* of Schmitt in *Carl Schmitt: Politics and Theory* (New York, Westport and London, 1990), pp. 57-58, and p.130; and Joseph W. Bendersky, "Carl Schmitt as Occasio," in *Telos* 78 (Winter 1988/89), pp. 197-205.

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pedigree, celebrate the liberal-democratic, universalist end of history.

Indeed, the Straussians whom Holmes thanks effusively for evaluating his chapter on Strauss, are politically indistinguishable from their critics. Allan Bloom's *The Closing of the American Mind* is not a counterrevolutionary tract but a paean to America's efforts to spread its democratic way of life; it characterizes the crusade against fascism as an "educational experiment" to further human rights.[3] Holmes' coupling of Strauss with Maistre and other exponents of natural inequalities is thoroughly misleading. It reveals little about Strauss' influence during the many years he spent at the University of Chicago after he left Germany. It is even less helpful for understanding Holmes' own Straussian friends, who are predominantly pre-McGovern liberal democrats.

In an earlier review in *The New Republic*, Alan Wolfe notes that Holmes conflates the ideas of everyone with whom he disagrees.[4] Accordingly, Holmes pays little attention to crucial differences between left- and right-wing communitarians or to those between self-critical liberals and authoritarian conservatives. At any rate, anyone who combines the social commentaries of Maistre, Schmitt, Strauss, Unger, Lasch, and MacIntyre should be taken with a grain of salt. When all is said and done, Holmes' liberalism turns out to be an arbitrary yardstick for placing the rest of the world inside or outside his own liberal church. All the same, he does make some correct observations. Critics of liberalism have generalized too much about liberal proceduralism, the moral subjectivism of all liberal thinkers, and their attempts to reduce human relations to economic transactions. Also, such critics have often ignored the status oppression to which 18th century liberals and philosophes were responding. It was morally fitting for classical liberals to affirm the individual's right to economic and political self-determinination in the face of arbitrary power and rigid class privilege. Locke treats the individual's self-ownership as his initial acquisition of property because that act marks off the free man from the slave or serf. Holmes is justified in criticizing MacIntyre for exaggerating liberal moral antinomianism. In the case of Kant, who requires universal Reason in making moral judgment, the MacIntyrean censure seems particularly hard to sustain.

Unfortunately, Holmes goes on to make other, more questionable claims. For example: "Although the Terror came after the Enlightenment, it had other causes than the Enlightenment's success. It may even have resulted from the failure of the Enlightenment to take root." Clearly the Terror, including the systematic killing of more than 100,000 Vendeans and Britons suspected of royalist sympathies, was attributable to more than the Enlightenment. But it is foolish to pretend that those who implicate the Enlightenment in this slaughter are merely

3. See Allan Bloom's *The Closing of the American Mind* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1987), p.153. Two perceptive essays on the convergence of the Right and Left through the beliefs in progress and the overcoming of particularities are Christopher Lasch, "The Obsolescence of Right and Left," in *New Oxford Review* 56 (April 1989), pp. 6-15; and Claes G. Ryn, "Universality or Uniformity?" in *Modern Age* 32 (Winter 1988), pp. 45-51.

4. (December 13,1993), pp. 44-46.

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"blaming the victim" (249). The question is whether the obsessive anti-clericalism and the plans to reconstruct society on the basis of Reason, both of which were inherent in Jacobinism, contributed to what are euphemistically called "revolutionary excesses." François Furet and Pierre Chaunu have written extensively on the anticlericalism that fueled the Terror and how thoroughly revolutionary violence was influenced by the Enlightenment. Unlike Holmes, Furet and Chaunu consider themselves only qualified admirers of the Age of Reason.[5] Holmes might have followed Furet, Jacob Talmon, and other critics of the Revolution, who draw useful distinctions between the moderate and radical Enlightenments. Such interpreters distinguish between a predominantly British or Anglophile liberal tradition arising in the late 17th century and a radical Enlightenment derivative from both the radically reconstructionist, anti-clerical side of the French Encyclopedists and Rousseau's democratic absolutism. Holmes, on the other hand, defends the entire Enlightenment (minus Rousseau) as an authentic expression of liberalism. He also keeps reiterating that classical liberals opposed "particularism" and promoted "universality" (194, 245). As Henry Vyverberg has demonstrated, however, this generalization could not be extended to the Encyclopedists, who were fascinated by cultural diversity.[6]

Despite their efforts to turn everyone into a rationalist, Diderot, Voltaire, and d'Alembert became more absorbed in the study of particularity than of uniformities. In this respect, they followed Montesquieu, who exalted the "genius of nations." Neither Montesquieu nor Hume, both of whom Holmes considers liberals, can be described as anti-particularist. Both opposed despotism, which Montesquieu in particular identified with the loss of national character. Holmes suggests that Montesquieu's remarks against oriental despotism in the *Persian Letters* is an implicit plea for human equality. Though the *Letters*' tirades against despotism are aimed at the court of Louis XV, Ann Cohler has argued that they are not directed against the monarchy as such. *The Spirit of the Laws* speaks generously of a monarchical regime, providing it exhibit prudence and moderation.[7] As Thomas Chaimowicz points out in a comparative study of Montesquieu and Burke, for Montesquieu the opposite of despotism was a national monarchy that takes into account popular sentiment and custom. Montesquieu believed such an institutional development was not possible for that part of humanity which had not experienced the humanizing side of Christianity and a tradition of constitutional law. An opponent of clerical intolerance, Montesquieu was well disposed towards Christian civilization.[8]

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5. See Pierre Chaunu, *Le Grande Déclassement* (Paris: Robert Laffort, 1989), pp. 91-116; and François Furet's *Revolutionary France*, trans. Antonia Nevill (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1992).

6. Henry Vyverberg, *Human Nature, Cultural Diversity, and the French Enlightenment* (London and New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), pp. 2-17.

7. Ann M. Cohler, *Montesquieu, Comparative Politics, and the Spirit of American Constitutionalism* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas,1988), especially pp. 85-97.

8. Thomas Chaimowicz, *Freiheit und Gleichgewicht im Denken Montesquieus und Burkes* (Vienna and New York: Springer Verlag, 1985), pp. 42-61.

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Holmes offers not a shred of proof for his claim that for Locke "the way society begins is irrelevant to how it is organized" and that "Locke's point is not that presocial individuals are fully rational but rather that hierarchy and rulership are legitimate only by the consent of the subordinated and the ruled" (22-23). If Locke did not believe that presocial individuals are not rational, why does he claim the opposite in Chapter Two of the *Second Treatise*? There one finds presocial individuals engaging in agriculture and commerce. It has also been argued, albeit never convincingly, that the introduction of a state of nature into the Second Chapter was only heuristic. Willmoore Kendall maintained that Locke created the state of nature as a "*locus statendi*," as a means of examining society from outside.[9] As Richard Ashcraft points out, regardless of whether Locke himself believed in an original, presocial state of human existence, many of his readers did. Levellers, Republicans of all types, Hobbesians, and even Hookerite Anglicans could relate to Locke's mythical construct.[10] The state of nature depicted in Hobbes's *Leviathan*, marked by "the war of all against all," was meant to show real life without a functioning civil society. This "ill condition that men by mere nature is actually placed in," is the recurrent, existential situation which obtains in the absence of a civil order. The lack of justice and reckless boldness Hobbes associates with this condition had concrete historical references: the English Civil War and the factional struggle in ancient Corcyra portrayed by Thucydides (whose histories Hobbes translated). Why assume that Locke or his readers believed any less in some kind of pre- or a-social state? Robert Nisbet,[11] one of Holmes' *bêtes noires*, has argued that Locke's image of a presocial and purely economic mankind has had a cultural impact.[12] Whether or not one accepts the core mythology, Americans have come to view social obligation in a contractual, self-interested way.

Another questionable aspect of Holmes' work is his reading of his own liberalism back into earlier thinkers. Thus he refers to "liberal universalism" when he quotes Locke's apothegm: "No man in civil society can be exempted from the laws of it" (238). Locke was not advocating universalism but only the condition of equal legal obligation that should obtain in particular societies.

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9. See Wilmore Kendall, *John Locke and the Doctrine of Majority Rule* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1941), pp. 9-20.

10. Richard Ashcraft, *Revolutionary Politics and Lockes' Two Treatises* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987), especially pp. 577-83. Ashcraft shows that Locke's state of nature was the Levellers' majoritarian one, with an interwoven defense of property. There is no reason to assume that Locke's readers would have doubted the authenticity of the myth.

11. Robert Nisbet, *The Quest for Community* (San Francisco: I.C.S., 1990) p. 202.

12. See David Johnston, *The Rhetoric of Leviathan* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), pp. 3-22 for evidence of Hobbes's indebtedness to Thucydicles. Despite the merits of his book, Johnson does not emphasize the connections between the Corcyran *stasis* and the state of nature as evoked in *Leviathan*, Chapter Thirteen, including Thucydicles' observations on "*physis anthropeia* (human nature)." See Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, ed. Michael Oakeshott (New York and London: Collier Macmillan, 1962), pp. 98-103; and Thucydicles, *Historiae* (Oxford Edition) III, pp. 82-83.

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Those who are not parties to the social contract, be it slaves or foreigners, canot demand legal impartiality. As an example of delayed cultural reaction, Gianfranco Miglio sees the contractual view of political coexistence as a "monumental development." The leader of a regional taxpayers' revolt against the bloated Italian federal bureaucracy, Miglio does not appeal to Holmes' hated concept of "organic democracy." Rather, he paraphrases Locke on the temporal and conditional nature of political loyalty. The state, Miglio insists, is no longer eternal but subject to renegotiation and even dissolution if it fails to protect life and property. He also notes the natural limits of a political society founded on consent: it need not accept as citizens those who are not recognized as "component parts" by the contracting members.[13]

Miglio may be closer than Holmes to Locke's contractual thinking. As the last paragraph of the first chapter of the *Second Treatise* clearly states, political authority exists to protect property, if necessary by killing thieves. Locke, who did not hesitate to deny the right of citizenship in England to Catholics and atheists, would have been amused by Holmes' *cri de coeur* that a society that "excludes women or blacks or Jews from rights constitutionally guaranteed to all citizens, is patently organized in an illiberal way." According to this sweeping judgment, all societies up to the present were patently "illiberal," including paradigmatic liberal societies such as Louis Philippe's France, Victorian England, and early America. In fact, by the standard Holmes sets at the beginning of his book, almost all classical liberals, using the term generously to include Montesquieu and Hume, would fall short of political acceptability. Jefferson and Hume were scientific racists; all the major figures of the Enlightenment were outspoken sexists, and Voltaire was a furious anti-Semite. These characteristics were not mere inconsistencies in the otherwise progressive mentalities of Holmes' selected precursors. They belonged to the mindsets of people who did not hold all the defining views of late 20th century liberals. Locke may have opposed royal prerogative, and he may have been a sexual egalitarian, at least by implication, but he did not believe in universal democracy or in having England spread "human rights."[14] He never spoke out in favor of emancipating black slaves or enfranchising Jews or women. He even designed a constitution for the Carolinas that provided for the institution of slavery. What Holmes means by the liberal tradition is his present-day beliefs, which beg for a suitable genealogy.[15]

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13. Gianfranco Miglio, *Disobbedienza Civile* (Milan: Arnoldo Mondadori Editore, 1993), pp. 20-21.

14. Central to Ashcraft's voluminous study of Locke are the competing claims in the two treatises between majoritarianism and the right of property. In the last paragraph in Chapter One of the *Second Treatise* states, property must be defended, if necessary, through capital punishment. See *Revolutionary Politics* and by the same author *Locke's Two Treatises of Government* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1987). See also John Locke, *Two Treatises of Government*, Peter Laslett, ed. (N.Y.: Cambridge University Press, 1963), p. 308.

15. In defense of his "liberal" worldview, Holmes resorts to a particularly desperate argument when, in a comment on Joseph de Maistre's critique of abstract universals

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Holmes' liberalism is not one Lord Acton, Vilfredo Pareto, and François Guizot would have recognized. It is a made-to-order liberalism dressed in oddments from an earlier age. The social order to which classical liberalism belonged was that of the educated *haute bourgeoisie* of the 19th and early 20th centuries. This class believed that education, along with property, had its privilege. Its spokesmen held no brief for the principles of social and gender equality. By the late 19th century, classical liberals like William Lecky and Max Weber saw their bourgeois civilization as endangered by both state bureaucracy and lower-class demands for social democracy. As its prophets of doom predicted, this world of etiquette, gentlemanly debate and restricted franchises has gone the way of the dinosaur. The "crisis of liberalism" Pareto foresaw at the beginning of this century has resulted in the abolition of that liberal class to which he himself belonged. The managerial welfare state has smashed the old liberalism and has replaced the bourgeois family with a manageable collection of abstract individuals. Government administration has begun to ignore even the popular democratic will it once invoked against the old bourgeois liberalism. What obtains today is guided democracy, mediated by federal agencies and judges. There is even a media apparatus teaching the therapeutic virtue of "sensitivity" and monopolizing the communication necessary for popular government. All that survives of the old order and of the

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from the *Soirées de St. Petersbourg*, he asserts: "Maistre's Russian is as much an abstraction as is Kant's human being" (230-31). Holmes belabors the point that all descriptive categories partake of abstractness. Thus it would be appropriate for a liberal to ask Maistre, who claims never to have seen a human being but only Frenchmen, Germans, Italians and Russians, if he had in fact encountered a Frenchman: "Was he not always faced with a Breton or Bordelais?" But this is precisely Maistre's position as presented in the *Soirées*: that the more historically concrete and culturally specific an ascribed identity the more fully and usefully it describes someone. Nor are the predicates Bordelais and French mutually exclusive. Both can and do simultaneously determine cultural, genetic and institutional identities. As for the comparison between national association and Kant's human being, Holmes may be overly impressed by Kantian anthropology. Does autonomous Reason proclaiming the Categorical Imperative independently of physical contexts describe human beings as lucidly as the terms used by Maistre? One does not have to be an Ultramontanist to appreciate Maistre's conceptual clarity. Despite his morbid and apocalyptic side, Maistre (who was indeed a heterodox Catholic and Mason) contributed significantly to the development of 19th century French sociology. His Ultramontane reasoning in *Du Pape* was intended to obviate national rivalries rather than, as Holmes states, to release citizens and subjects from loyalty to national sovereigns. Finally, it is puzzling that Holmes should stress, particularly in his footnotes, that Maistre was not an orthodox Catholic, despite his clericalist politics. This has been known since Maistre's own lifetime, and his 19th century apologists, starting with Count Louis-Pierre Blacas, tried repeatedly to answer that charge. Perhaps Holmes believes that he must reach out to Maistrean Catholics — and convince them that his own brand of liberalism is more Catholic than is Maistrean theology. See my *Conservative Millenarians* (New York: Fordham, 1980), especially pp. 9-17; "The Eschalogy of the *Eos*-Circle," in *Church History* 39 (June 1970), pp. 187-97; and "Utopians of the Right: Maistre and Schlegel," in *Modern Age* 24 (Winter 1980), pp. 150-60.

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old liberalism is mere packaging for various programs and gestures — from deregulation schemes and the relief of corporate taxes to Progressivist social engineering and the right to make obscene gestures in public.[16]

The question is whether today's liberalism is still coherent and recognizable. Can one trace it even as far back as Franklin Roosevelt, let alone to James Madison? Both would undoubtedly be shocked by this vastly transformed heritage of ideas associated with them. Already by the mid-1940s Hermann Finer and H. Salwyn Shapiro were writing diatribes against free marketeers who called themselves liberal. Such *bona fide* anti-Nazi European liberals as Ludwig Mises and Friedrich Hayek were attacked: both were linked to fascism by American social democrats, who at that time were claiming the liberal banner.[17]

By now liberalism has been abstracted so much from its original social and cultural context that the term exemplifies the Nominalist's *flatus vocis*: mere breath lacking any meaning. Holmes unwittingly exemplifies this problem. At one point he scolds Lasch for endorsing only part of Martin Luther King's mission, which was to improve the lives of his parishioners in the South. He complains that Lasch withholds his praise from King's later work of pushing for open housing laws in the North. Most galling, Lasch suggests that communities survive best by encouraging endogamous marriages. Even if that is Lasch's belief, why must Holmes make such disapproving faces? (130-134). If, as Holmes states, liberalism is about individual choices, what harm is there if people choose to live with members of their own group? Besides exogamous marriage and open housing laws, Holmes' liberal heritage may require sympathy for the agonized "progressives" who supported compulsory bussing on behalf of school integration. Holmes is openly contemptuous of the anti-bussing ethnic enclaves, though it is unclear whether his sensibility here is imagined to have 18th century roots.

Given the disintegrated or constantly metamorphosed state of liberalism, the question arises as to whether critiques of liberalism have any further use. Holmes' jeremiad to the contrary notwithstanding, they may. The remnants

16. Thus in central Pennsylvania the ACLU has mobilized lawyers to force the Lititz townspeople to remove a manger scene from the public square — a Christmas decoration put there every year since the Moravian Brethren founded the town in the 1740s. Townspeople have been told by ACLU activists that their ancestral custom violates our "liberal heritage." See *Lancaster New Era* (December 28, 1993), pp. A, 1, 6, and 8. Even more baffling is the reference to "liberalism" in an editorial by Michael Walzer in *Dissent* (Fall 1993), p. 401. Though Clinton is accused of disregarding this "ism," the reader is never told what it signifies.

17. Both Mises and Hayek contended that classical liberals were more "democratic" than social democrats. Unlike the latter, liberals were thought to operate on "democratic" principles that protect property and contractual rights, while providing for parliamentary stability. Mises was plainly confusing democratic government with liberal legality. See Friedrick A. Hayek, *The Constitution of Liberty* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960), pp. 148, 248, and 489; and Ludwig von Mises, *Die Gemeinwirtschaft*, reprint from the 1932 second edition (Munich: Philosophia Verlag, 1982), pp. 44-63.

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of liberalism that are selectively invoked or resurrected still have instrumental value for those seeking to destroy communities and collective identities. Individual self-actualization, civil and human rights, and the government's crusade for equality (really homogenization) have become the watchwords of New Class managerial domination. Though Holmes may not fancy the term, liberal slogans are used to "manipulate" and legal pretexts are invented by judges to delegitimate social traditions they find insufficiently progressive. Old liberal notions like distributed power and federalism are not likely to make a comeback without popular commotion; but laundry lists of human rights and decorative proceduralism will be kept around as long as they can aid drives for managerial power at the expense of any social institution standing between the individual and the state. Holmes' warnings about the "community trap" ignore graver dangers that do not come from dead authoritarian Catholics. Unless one brings up the question of threatened communities and politically assaulted authorities, starting with parental control, Holmes and his ilk will continue promulgating their liberal syllabus of errors.[18] Unlike those apologists for the welfare state who try to trace liberal values at work in the process of political and economic centralization, Holmes simply assumes a continuity which he never demonstrates. His pastiche versions of liberalism in what is becoming a postliberal age will not rescucitate the fatally ill patient.

Paul Gottfried

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18. Holmes' liberal tradition appeals to icons that can be appropriated by those whom Holmes considers "illiberal." Thus Montesquieu was admired not only by the French Enlightenment, as Thomas Schackleton demonstrates in his biography, but also of French and German conservatives. As Nolte points out, the counterrevolutionary Charles Maurras considered *L'Esprit des Lois* his forerunner concerning national and regional traditions. See Ernst Nolte, *Three Faces of Fascism*, trans. by Leila Vennewitz (New York: Holt, Rinehart,1965), pp. 42 and 121. The *Second Treatise* was very popular not only among Levellers and the American revolutionary Sons of Liberty, but also among Southern slaveowners of the 1850s about to dissolve the social contract that formed the American federal union. Conversely, the most eloquent English opponent of the French Revolution, Edmund Burke, has been praised by socialists such as Harold Lasky and Conor Cruise O'Brien. Both appreciated Burke as a nonutopian reformer who attacked abstract generalizations about human rights. Hume, whom Holmes considers a liberal as opposed to a philosophically skeptical Tory, has long been cited as a critic of democratic enthusiasms and universal rights. Among Hume's passionate admirers is Robert Nisbet, whom Holmes wrongly identifies as a communitarian. (Nisbet has warned repeatedly against the desperate search for collective identities in the modern age, even while having good things to say about medieval social bonds). For an evaluation of Hume as the progenitor of what is conventionally presented as the historically-minded conservatism of Burke, see Donald W. Livingston, *Hume's Philosophy of the Common Life* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press,1986). Holmes might at least have consulted the works of philosophers who have studied and taught Hume for over twenty years, before simply assuming Hume's liberalism to be an anticipation of his own ideological paradigm.

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Re-Reading Arendt

Margaret Canovan, *Hannah Arendt: A Reinterpretation of her Political Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 298 pp.

Two decades ago Margaret Canovan published the first book on Arendt's political thought.[1] Since then there has been an explosion of Arendt scholarship. After a lull in the mid-1980s, at the height of the poststructuralist vogue, scholarly interest in Arendt is even stronger now than before. Within such a context, Canovan's "reinterpretation" stands out as the best researched and most illuminating evaluation of Arendt to date. No one knows Arendt's corpus better than Canovan. Yet, she does not allow her admiration to blind her to troubling aspects of Arendt's thought. She tries to resolve apparent contradictions, but not to the point of falsifying them.[2] Above all, Canovan grounds her conclusions in a painstaking archival study of Arendt's unpublished letters, lectures, and manuscripts, now housed in the Library of Congress.[3] Consulting these materials has also enabled her to cast doubt on certain widely-accepted interpretations (including the ones she once held[4]), and to present Arendt's theory as a coherent whole, emanating from a single problematic.[5] That career-spanning problematic is totalitarianism.

Following Elisabeth Young-Bruehl, Canovan presents the young Arendt as an unworldly, assimilated German-Jewish philosopher.[6] The brutal realities of Nazism ended her political somnolence, leading her to inquire into the genesis and appeal of totalitarianism — something she believed would always be a

1. Margaret Canovan, *The Political Thought of Hannah Arendt* (London: Dent and Sons, 1974).

2. Canovan, who faults commentators such as Seyla Benhabib for trying to make Arendt's writings too systematic, describes Arendt's enterprise as one of "unsystematic system-building," p. 5.

3. Canovan mentions that Jerome Kohn, who was a student of Arendt's in the 1970s, is now editing some of these papers for publication. *Ibid.*, p. 285.

4. See her article on "The Contradictions of Hannah Arendt's Political Thought," in *Political Theory*, Vol. 6, No. 1 (1978), pp. 5-26. Canovan, however, remains consistent with some of her earlier work, particularly "Arendt, Rousseau and Human Plurality in Politics," in *Journal of Politics*, Vol. 45, No. 2 (1983), pp. 286-302.

5. Canovan rejects interpretations bifurcating Arendt's intellectual career into dramatically different phases. See Leah Bradshaw, *Acting and Thinking: The Political Thought of Hannah Arendt* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1989).

6. Canovan emphasizes the autobiographical significance of Arendt's early study, *Rahel Varnhagen: The Life of a Jewish Woman*. See also Joanne Cutting-Gray, "Hannah Arendt's *Rahel Varnhagen*," in *Philosophy and Literature*, Vol. 15, No. 2 (1991), pp. 229-45.

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possibility since it arose out of unresolved, deep-rooted problems. Refusing to historicize the now-unfashionable concept of totalitarianism simply as a Cold War residue, Canovan interprets Arendt as combating the totalitarian specter by rethinking Western politics. She deftly reprises Arendt's view that Nazism was a logical, though by no means necessary, outcome of earlier processes. Capitalism subordinated fixed property to liquid, unstable wealth, generating a mind-set in which limitless growth became the overriding goal. At the same time, it created masses of lonely, superfluous, world-alienated people as desperate for meaning and coherence as for material sustenance, and therefore susceptible to political mobilization. Imperialism extended the capitalist logic to politics, resulting in Nazi racism and arbitrary bureaucratic rule. As the guarantor of human rights and formal legal equality, the state contained these dangerous developments for a time, but ultimately turned out to be helpless in the wake of economic crises and resulting pressures for discrimination against non-nationals. Because of their cultural distinctness and their association with the state, Jews became convenient targets. Thus National Socialism was made possible by "subterranean currents" in Western history that led to "the collapse of humanistic, enlightened civilization" (20-21).

This interpretation of Nazism endeared Arendt to the Left, at least until she extended her analysis to Stalin's regime. Indeed, many people have tended to reject the very concept of totalitarianism understood as a monolithic phenomenon.[7] Because of this, Canovan endeavors to explain why Arendt found the affinities between Nazism and Stalinism so striking. She stresses Arendt's view that both Left and Right totalitarianism "combine[d] a sense of infinite power with a total lack of human responsibility" (63), a surrender to historical "laws" that made race or class warfare inevitable. Canovan also acknowledges that *The Origins of Totalitarianism* was weakest and least convincing in its account of Stalin's regime, which Arendt assimilated to the Nazi model almost as an afterthought, with insufficient argument and evidence.

Canovan is less concerned with justifying Arendt's characterization of Stalinism than with explaining why *The Origins of Totalitarianism* is such a lopsided book and how Arendt intended to redress that asymmetry. Unlike Nazi ideology, which originated in the backwaters of Western thought, Stalinism was part of the mainstream — a radical, if perverse, legacy of Enlightenment humanism. How could Marxism, for which Arendt harbored some sympathy, and the Western tradition have spawned such an offspring? This question tormented her, since she had sought initially to appeal to the tradition as an antidote to Nazi atavism (164).

Arendt wrestled with the problem in a never-completed book project tentatively titled "Totalitarian Elements in Marxism." In this manuscript, she identified a fatal flaw in Marxist theory. In the process of doing so, she first articulated

7. See John Stanley, "Is Totalitarianism a New Phenomenon? Reflections on Hannah Arendt's *Origins of Totalitarianism*," in *Review of Politics*, Vol. 49, No. 2 (1987), pp. 177-207.

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her well-known distinction between "labor" (a cyclical, repetitive activity meant to sustain the life process and promote the confort of our species) and "work" (the use of tools to create a human world). Arendt came to question the value not only of Marxism but of the philosophical mainstream since Plato as a source of political guidance.[8] It was this dissatisfaction with the tradition that inspired her to shelve "Totalitarian Elements" and write *The Human Condition*. This is the basis of two of Canovan's claims: (a) that neither *The Human Condition* in particular nor Arendt's theory in general can be understood independently of "the political catastrophes of the mid-century" (7), and (b) that Arendt's encounter with Marxism is the missing link in her intellectual evolution.

Arendt praised Marx for discerning in the temporal unfolding of capitalism the emergence of "labor" and the *Weltanschaaung* associated with it from the obscurity of the household. She believed he was also remarkably prescient in predicting that in a laboring society, government increasingly would be preoccupied with managing the economy (society's collective "life process"), as growth, abundance, consumption, and leisure became major public concerns (70). Where Marx erred was in approving of politics conducted in the mode of labor, wrongly believing that it heralded liberation when in fact it yoked people to natural necessity. Compounding this "antihumanist" mistake was a "humanist" one: when Marx was not interpreting politics in terms of labor, he followed the philosophical tradition by grasping it in terms of "work." Thus people "make" history freely, just as carpenters make tables and chairs. But such a position bodes ill politically, not only because it wildly exaggerates the degree to which political outcomes can be predicted and controlled, but also because fabrication typically involves doing violence to one's materials and reduces everything to an instrument as, a means to an end.

Although these aspects of Marxism were not totalitarian in themselves; their paradoxical combination of the surrender to necessity (inherent in labor) and the belief in human mastery (inherent in work) would become "lethal in the hands of Stalin" (75). Like Hitler in Germany, Stalin would use terror to try to eliminate both the stabilizing restraints of positive law and the destabilizing potential of human plurality (individual distinctness and uniqueness), which is the existential ground of action. The totalitarian conceit was that neutralizing these two factors would permit the historical process of class or race warfare to speed toward its inevitable conclusion. Marx' theory fed into such a project by presenting humanity as a collective subject whose history comprised a single narrative with a predictable trajectory (77). Thus *The Human Condition*, which most

8. No other commentator besides Canovan has discussed this manuscript. Many, however, have responded to Arendt's published views on Marx. Most of this reaction has come from the Left, and not surprisingly, has been unfavorable. See W. A. Suchting, "Marx and Hannah Arendt's *The Human Condition*," in *Ethics* No. 73 (1962), pp. 47-55; Jennifer Ring, "On Needing Both Marx and Arendt," in *Political Theory*, Vol. 17, No. 3 (1989), pp. 432-48; and Bhikhu Parekh, "Hannah Arendt's Critique of Marx," in Melvyn Hill, ed., *Hannah Arendt: The Recovery of the Public World* (New York: St. Martin's, 1979).

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commentators have considered the core statement of Arendt's political thought, must be approached in a new way in light of her struggle to understand totalitarianism. Canovan argues that this book, however dazzling, is neither the best access point into Arendt's theory (157), nor even a work primarily about politics *per se*, but only a "prolegomena" to such an effort (100). Indeed, to concentrate on *The Human Condition* to the virtual exclusion of other works is misguided, for it "was actually only one layer in her reflections," "one of several partial solutions" that she advanced for modernity's most vexing problems (138).

Canovan complains that *The Human Condition* has rarely been read with care. In particular, she lambasts the view that Arendt was obsessed with political "action" (and with the ancient Greeks as its consummate practitioners). Of course, action alone can combat the deadly logic of totalitarianism. Yet, action is far from being synonymous with politics. It is better understood as "the aspect of the human condition out of which politics arises" (130). Canovan goes to great lengths to show that Arendt's prime examples of action in *The Human Condition* are essentially non-political (147). Arendt recognized the dangers of action only too well. For one thing, its unintended consequences can threaten the very existence of life on earth,[9] as Arendt's reflections on nuclear weapons illustrate (81-84). Because of its unpredictability, action must be confined to the intrahuman sphere, not transported into the realm of humanity's relations with nature.[9] Even within this intrahuman sphere, action needs to be "tamed and made manageable" and given "a stable institutional form" (143), lest it overwhelm the fragile artifice of civilization. In no way, then, is it legitimate to read *The Human Condition* as an "unqualified paean of praise for action" (132-33). On the contrary, Canovan regards Arendt's masterpiece as a modern morality play, in which *hubris* will call forth *nemesis* unless actors exercise restraint and responsibility.

Finally, Canovan criticizes the common view that Arendt idealized the classical polis. This view holds that Arendt was afflicted with "Hellenic nostalgia" and sought either to resuscitate the halcyon days of Athenian democracy (115) or at least to recommend a neo-Aristotelian approach to politics. Such an interpretation[10] ignores Arendt's persistent and often severe criticisms of Greek

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9. See Barry Cooper, "Action into Nature: Hannah Arendt's Reflections on Technology," in Richard Day, Ronald Beiner, and Joseph Masciulli, eds., *Democratic Theory and Technological Society* (New York: M.E. Sharpe, 1988), pp. 316-35; Pieter Tijmes, "The Archimedean Point and Eccentricity: Hannah Arendt's Philosophy of Science and Technology," in *Inquiry* No. 35 (1992), pp. 389-406; and Kerry Whiteside, "Hannah Arendt's Critique of Productivism," in *Environmental Ethics* (forthcoming).

10. See Noel O'Sullivan, "Hannah Arendt: Hellenic Nostalgia and Industrial Society," in Anthony de Crespigny and Kenneth Minogue, eds., *Contemporary Political Philosophers* (New York: Dodd, Mead, and Co., 1975), pp. 228-51; Jürgen Habermas, "Hannah Arendt's Communications Concept of Power," in *Social Research* Vol. 44, No. 1 (1977), pp. 3-24; George Kateb, *Hannah Arendt: Politics, Conscience, Evil* (Totowa, N.J.: Rowman and Allenheld, 1984); Hanna Pitkin, "Justice: On Relating Private and Public," in *Political Theory* Vol. 9, No. 3 (1981), pp. 327-52; and John Gunnell, *Political Theory: Tradition and Interpretation* (Cambridge: Winthrop, 1979), pp. 45-51, 78-82.

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political life, not to mention her frequent invocation of non-Greek (notably, Roman and early Christian) ideas and her belief that classical philosophers mistrusted, misunderstood, and distorted classical practice. When Arendt turns to antiquity she does not do so from "polis envy." Instead, she is trying to recover key elements that either have been lost or else are buried beneath a conceptual apparatus dismissing politics with condescension and suspicion. Far from trying to "revive ancient forms," Arendt wishes only to use them as reminders of "fundamental human capacities" (140). This is not the same as developing an ontology. Barring a few reservations (102), Canovan approaches *The Human Condition* as an existentialist work. Arendt's teachers, Heidegger and Jaspers, loom large here, and there are also occasional references to Camus,[11] with whom Arendt affirmed the existence of, and the need for, limits in human life, the lack of a fixed human "nature" and the importance of taking responsibility for the inherited world.

Arendt was struck by the irrevocable break in tradition that defines the contemporary situation, particularly in the wake of horrors such as the atomic bomb and the death camps. The silver lining of this otherwise disastrous state of affairs is that it is now possible to suspend venerable categories and examine human affairs in a new light, "rethink [ing] political concepts in the light of political experiences that had been ignored or distorted" (69-70) within the philosophical canon. In particular, Arendt sought to emphasize the centrality of plurality in politics (131), i.e., the uniqueness of individuals with particular standpoints that can be disclosed and shared in public settings. This insight, which Canovan sees as the essence of Arendt's political thought (281), led Arendt to issue a three-fold challenge to mainstream political philosophy since Plato, regarding politics as a realm (a) of multiple opinions rather than unitary truths, (b) of acting rather than fabricating, and (c) of power understood not as dominion but as a potential for joining together and doing new things. Ultimately, a modified form of the classical republican tradition would recommend itself to Arendt as the best way for people both to ward off political evil and (what amounted to the same thing) to regain important capacities that have atrophied in the modern world.

Having set the stage for an extended meditation on politics with *The Human Condition*, Arendt undertook to write a companion volume, "Introduction to Politics," which was intended to capitalize on the breakdown of traditional intellectual foundations by examining political concepts and problems afresh. Although this book never came to fruition, its shards are apparent in other works of the period: *Between Past and Future*, *Men in Dark Times*, *Eichmann in Jerusalem* and *On Revolution*. Canovan shows that Arendt's preoccupation with political evil — where it comes from, what guises it assumes, how best to prevent it — continued during this, the middle phase of her career. Here Canovan breaks little new ground, contenting herself with offering a lucid, persuasive

11. See Jeffrey Isaac, *Arendt, Camus, and Modern Rebellion* (New Haven: Yale, 1992).

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rebuttal to the canard that Arendt was a political immoralist.[12] It is a slander rooted in several related arguments often misconstrued, whether by Arendt's Left or Right-wing critics: e.g., that pity can be a murderous sentiment in the public arena, that moral "absolutes" and the dictates of conscience are not adequate safeguards against brutality, and that the political horrors of this century are attributable as much to the banal administrator as the malicious sadist. But the accusation, Canovan maintains, loses plausibility when one places *The Origins of Totalitarianism* at the center of Arendt's thought.

Canovan emphasizes that for Arendt modern political evil paradigmatically has worn two faces. The first, as embodied in the Nazi Holocaust, was a phenomenon of "moral collapse," the breakdown of age-old restraints on human conduct. Conventional moral restraints are not likely to repair themselves. Consequently, some other prophylactic must be found. Since Arendt thought that "the seeds of totalitarianism were deeply planted in modernity itself" (202), she turned for guidance to the classical republican (civic humanist) tradition associated with Machiavelli, Harrington, Rousseau, and Jefferson. This, however, was a *modified* republicanism — one might even call it an *existentialized* republicanism — organized not around austerity, martial virtues, communitarian togetherness, and cultural exclusiveness, but rather around "free discussion" among equal, plural citizens (203, 207, 248). Perhaps Canovan could have been clearer in enunciating the differences between her reading of Arendt's republicanism and those offered by the "Grecophile" interpreters. Her reasoning seems to be that regular political interaction fosters not only civic solidarity, but also certain habits of mind — judgment, taste, common sense, impartiality, and an appreciation for difference (227-28) — which, taken together, are anathema to totalitarianism. Unfortunately, while persuasive in many ways, Arendt's argument seems vitiated by her own admission that most people (regardless of class, education, etc.) simply lack, and will always lack, the urge to participate in politics (229). If such is the case, how can the myriad virtues she associates with active citizenship filter down to the mass of non-participants? If they did not, then how could one claim to have found an answer to totalitarianism?

At any rate, the second face of political evil, the Left variant, perplexed Arendt far more than the Right, for it often issued from the "heights of political idealism." Examples range from the French Reign of Terror to the tendency of Stalin's fellow-travelers to excuse his crimes. The problem here was with a "treacherous strand" (166) of progressive thought: the confusion of action with fabrication, and the consequent legitimation of violence in politics. Here, again, a "new republicanism" seemed to recommend itself. Especially in *On Revolution*, Arendt tried to establish that when the sentiment of pity becomes the prime mover of politics, boundless violence is the probable result.

12. This argument is best articulated by Kateb, *Hannah Arendt*, *op. cit.*, but it was also implicit in much of the acrimonious debate triggered by *Eichmann in Jerusalem*.

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One should not conclude from this that Arendt espoused a politics of callousness and indifference. Perhaps simplistically, Arendt believed that not politics but technology and economic growth were the proper answers for "the social question," and that political freedom today is "possible only in the absence of mass poverty" (231, 237). More to the point, she held that pity demeans and patronizes the suffering and oppressed, while at the same time destroying the worldly distance between people. It thus contrasts with a republican principle such as solidarity which, because it affirms the plurality, dignity and formal equality of others, is more consonant with the republican ethos. A recurrent theme of classical republicanism, Canovan notes, is the fragility of public space. Free political institutions, as part of the artifice of civilization, are rare and exceptional, and highly vulnerable to destruction from both within and without. The politics of pity, however seductive it may be, threatens public space, overwhelming it with biological needs that initiate a cycle of political deterioration. Thus, tragically, it is not only the worst impulses but sometimes also the best ones that must be restrained when acting politically. Canovan concludes that ways must be found to "*combine* stable institutions and free action" (234), and to issue a "summons to political responsibility" (276).

Canovan's attention to the pitfalls of Left and Right politics as Arendt understood them is becoming increasingly useful. Arendt often baffles readers because she does not fit well on the conventional Left/Right spectrum. These terms, however, are useful mainly in the context of capture-the-state politics, and the policy choices that politically successful groups attempt to institutionalize. Arendt rejects this whole notion of politics. Political action for her is the last and best defense against the inhuman world of totalitarianism, because it allows people to avoid two bad and dialectically related tendencies. On the one hand, it enables people to develop and express individual differences without succumbing to atomistic isolation; on the other, it allows them to forge common bonds and engage in common projects without surrendering their egos to some larger totality.

If most of Arendt's career was dedicated to convincing others of "the vital importance of politics" (276), she allowed herself to return at the end to her first love, philosophy. But even here, when reflecting on *The Life of the Mind*, political concerns seeped into her analysis. As Canovan shows, the problem of the relation between theory and practice — the question of whether anything inherent in mental activities like thinking, willing, and judging predisposed the individual toward or against politics and its virtues — began to preoccupy Arendt. Why had philosophers in the West so consistently devalued political activity? Why had some otherwise brilliant thinkers (Heidegger, most notoriously) exhibited such bad political sense? In general Canovan presents Arendt as finding fault with all theorists who, on principle, disdain interpersonal communication. Such thinkers scorn others' opinions as unworthy of notice; they tend toward a smug, solipsistic withdrawal from the world, feeling no need to test themselves by engaging different positions in dialogue (258). This is hardly

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inevitable, as the examples of Socrates and Jaspers attest, but it is an "occupational hazard," a "vice" philosophers must try to avoid (261-62). Plurality, for Arendt, is the essence of both political life and critical thought.

Canovan's reading of Arendt hits some problematic notes, as when she refers in passing to alleged similarities between Arendt and (of all people) the hyper-libertarian Ayn Rand (215). Yet, she exhibits sound judgment and provides compelling documentation for virtually all her interpretations. However, despite Canovan's claims regarding Arendt's continuing relevance, she emerges here as a time-bound figure, someone whose obsession with mid-century woes makes her fascinating from an intellectual history standpoint while perhaps decreasing her cachet as the world careens toward the year 2000. It would be too easy, on the basis of this book, to dismiss her as a philosopher of totalitarianism who need not be read anymore, both because such regimes are either gone or on the verge of internal transformation, and because the political center-stage seems likely to be occupied henceforth by different sorts of concerns. Has Canovan placed Arendt in context, only at the expense of decreasing her contemporary relevance?[13]

What needs to be done is to read *The Origins of Totalitarianism* as a book that dramatizes the fragility of the modern state (with its foundations in contractarianism and its implicit promise of equal rights for all) when attacked by adherents of the "nation," understood in terms of blood, race, sect, tribe, language, etc. Arendt fears that the modern state is hollow and its promises empty in the face of more compelling "identity politics." Of course, the US has rarely had to face its fragility head-on, because residual respect for universal legal or moral principles still give it some legitimacy, and because economic success (or the hope thereof) has kept most citizens quiescent. But what happens to the state where those legal-moral traditions have taken only shallow root, or where growth, the market, and prosperity seem to be bad jokes dreamed up by Western economists? There the state is increasingly overwhelmed: unable to protect its citizens, make legitmate policies, uphold basic civility and assert control over its territory. One would encounter, in short, the very world Arendt describes in her exegesis of 19th and early 20th century politics, *and* the world of the end of the 20th century. From this, the vantage point of a world that resembles 1890 more than 1940, the first two volumes of

13. A younger generation of scholars has taken up this challenge, at least to the extent of having Arendt encounter postmodernism. See Dana Villa, "Postmodernism and the Public Sphere," in *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 86, No. 3 (1992), pp. 712-21; Bonnie Honig, "Declarations of Independence: Arendt and Derrida on the Problem of Founding a Republic," *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 85, No. 1 (1991), pp. 97-113; and Lisa Disch, "More Truth Than Fact: Storytelling as Critical Understanding in the Writings of Hannah Arendt," in *Political Theory*, Vol. 21, No. 4 (1993), pp. 665-94. The recent renaissance in Arendt scholarship is due in large measure to both the exhaustion of postmodernism and, ironically, the recognition that Arendt anticipated many postmodernist concerns.

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The Origins of Totalitarianism — Antisemitism and *Imperialism* — would have far more resonance than the last volume of that trilogy, focused on the horrors of the Hitler and Stalin regimes.

In this light, Arendt's work looks like a strategy to reverse the hollowness, vulnerability, and impotence of many modern states by shifting the state's focus from law, bureaucratic rule, and "social" programs to the formation of *citizens* capable of *action*. Canovan lends support to this position in one of the strongest sections of her book (243-49). If the state were understood as the external, institutionalized guarantor of the public realm, it could offer people a new way to define their political loyalties. One road out of such a fragmented, brawling society leads to totalitarianism. Arendt's ideas suggest a different, older, much more attractive, and yet perhaps still plausible way to define citizens and polities.

Sandra K. Hinchman

Arendt and the Politics of Plurality

Ursula Ludz, ed., *Hannah Arendt, Was ist Politik? Fragmente aus dem Nachlass* (Munich/Zurich: Piper Verlag, 1993), 235 pp.

During her lifetime Hannah Arendt was a controversial figure whose reputation as a political thinker underwent many fluctuations. Since her death in 1975 she has come to be recognized as one of the most original political thinkers of the century and has attracted an increasing amount of scholarly comment. Most, however, has been devoted to a rather narrow selection of her works, above all *The Human Condition*, to a lesser extent *The Life of the Mind* and (for rather special reasons) *Eichmann in Jerusalem*. Since these works, particularly *The Human Condition*, need to be understood in the context of the full range of Arendt's thought as it appears not only in many other books and articles but also in the substantial collection of unpublished papers she left behind, it is fortunate this rich heritage is now being brought into the public domain. Ursula Ludz's edition of fragmentary drafts for an unwritten *Einführung in die Politik*, *Was ist Politik?*, is a significant contribution.

During one of her visits with Karl Jaspers in Basel in 1955, Arendt met the publisher Klaus Piper, who suggested she write a short introductory book on politics along the lines of Jaspers' *Einführung in die Philosophie*, which had already

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achieved considerable success. Arendt agreed. Although the project never came to fruition, succumbing finally in 1960 to the pressure of other commitments, by then Arendt had written a series of plans and sections in draft, some of which remained unpublished. In contrast to the bulk of Arendt's surviving papers from the 1950s (mostly lectures written in English for delivery in the US), those intended for *Einführung in die Politik* were written in German.

Ludz has done an impressively thorough piece of detective work in tracing the evolution of Arendt's plans for the book, dating the texts and setting them in their context. This was no easy task, for the shape of the project kept changing during the five years Arendt entertained it. In the intervals of producing a stream of other publications, she wrote fragmentary drafts which are quite different. Perhaps the notion she might produce a genuinely introductory book on politics to stand alongside Jaspers' popular best-seller was never realistic: certainly she was always more interested in working out her own lines of thought than in communicating with a wider public. At any rate, before she dropped the project, it had turned into a scheme for a two volume *magnum opus* which would have included not only the material that went into *On Revolution* but would have gone beyond *The Human Condition* to provide (among other things) a "systematic examination of those spheres of the world and human life which we properly call political."[1]

Ludz identifies three phases in the development of Arendt's thought about the book, reflected in texts printed in this volume. The first (1956-7) is concerned chiefly with the prejudices against politics shared by modern and ancient philosophers, and with the relation between prejudice and judgment. The second (1958-9) produced more substantial texts on the meaning of politics, which make up the bulk of the present volume and are marked by a strong preoccupation with war and the possibility of nuclear destruction. The third, adumbrated in a research proposal drawn up by Arendt at the end of 1959, is not supported by surviving German texts of that date, but other material from the 1950s, published and unpublished, makes clear that Arendt had in mind an ambitious program for the examination of political concepts such as government, law, war etc, as well as a study (echoing Montesquieu) of the principles and modes of action of forms of government. It is apparent, then, that the fragmentary remains of this unwritten book do not easily fit together into a whole. Ludz' editing is meticulous, and a substantial commentary sets them in context and clarifies their place in Arendt's thought.

Although Arendt speaks in one fragment of setting down what every citizen should know about politics, as sketches for an introductory book the texts are almost comically implausible. As Ludz points out, to read them is to become a spectator of Arendt's thought processes as she wrestled with ideas that interested her. It is easy to see that whenever she focused on a specific point, great vistas

1. Quoted from an application for funds to carry out the project made by Arendt in December 1959 (201).

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of speculation began to open up, leading her far from her starting-point but linking up with other apparently separate ideas. This process can be observed, for example, in the fragments from 1956-7. The shorter of the two begins by saying that anyone who wants to talk about politics (at that time) has to reckon with the widespread contemporary prejudice against politics fueled above all by the threat of nuclear destruction. The second fragment starts identically, but rapidly plunges into a long meditation on the place of prejudice in social life and its relation to judgment, especially to judgment in new and unprecedented circumstances. This discussion, closely akin to Arendt's 1953 article, "Understanding and Politics," illustrates the way in which her mind tended to pursue its efforts at understanding with scant regard for the limits of the particular project on which she was nominally engaged.

The very shifts and changes in Arendt's plans for the *Einführung* bear witness to the fact that underlying this particular project (and all Arendt's published work) was a deep reservoir of thought from which flowed the connected streams she chose to follow at particular times. The papers published here, along with the rest from the 1950s, show that she emerged from her work on *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (published in 1951) with a vast agenda of questions about politics that was more than enough to last her for the rest of her life — not only the questions about the sources of Marxist totalitarianism that led her to investigate "work" and "labor" and to distinguish them from "action," but also questions about the Western philosophical tradition, about the relation between philosophy and politics (present in her thinking in the early 1950s, long before *The Life of the Mind*) about power and violence, law and war, political action and political systems. Although the more specifically political of these questions did find their way into her published work (particularly *On Revolution*), they were never given the systematic treatment she would have liked. Ludz is on strong ground in suggesting that the unwritten *Einführung* represents not only a kind of missing link between *The Human Condition* and *The Life of the Mind*, but more importantly a specifically political stage in Arendt's thought.

This is what makes the publication of Arendt's manuscripts relevant. Where a thinker as original as Arendt is concerned, any additional text must be welcome, but the significance of her papers (not only the sketches for the *Einfuhrung* published here, but also her lectures from the 1950's) goes far beyond that, setting *The Human Condition* in a new light. Since that book has usually been regarded as Arendt's *magnum opus*, her political theory has often been supposed to be mainly concerned with an unfavorable comparison of modern materialism with ancient heroics. Not surprisingly, her thought seems to have little to do with politics in the usual sense. It is therefore essential to realize that *The Human Condition* represents only one aspect of the ambitious rethinking of politics on which she embarked after the publication of *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, and that it is in a sense a prepolitical work, concerned to clear the ground before she got down to the quintessentially "political" topics on which she was led to reflect by the experiences of totalitarianism and nuclear war.

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In the longer draft for the *Einführung*, which Ludz dates to 1958-9, Arendt explicitly identifies totalitarianism and nuclear war as the fundamental political experiences of our time. It is in this context of justified fear that she introduces one of her most characteristic doctrines — the claim that freedom, understood as the apparently miraculous power to start afresh, is what politics is essentially about. In the face of a common inclination to suppose that politics is the root of current troubles, she argues that (properly understood) it may provide a fragile ground for hope of a remedy. Politics, she argues, should not be thought of as routine, but rather as an ever-present human possibility rarely realized. In a familiar move, she seeks illumination from ancient sources, but not in the sense of holding up the Greek polis as an example to emulate. As she points out, wars of extermination (if, necessarily, on a smaller scale than today) were a regular feature of ancient life. Thinking about the Greeks and the destruction of Troy, or Rome and the destruction of Carthage, is a way of considering how we might move in an intensely dangerous world from which the Platonic and Christian belief in fixed standards has disappeared. When the Western tradition of divine laws of nature ceased to be self-evident, it left nihilism in its wake: There are no standards given to us, therefore it is assumed that none can exist. But Arendt finds in the practical (rather than philosophical) Greek and Roman concepts of law two different and complementary ways in which citizens acting together gave standards to themselves. Where the Greeks understood law as a limit, a wall round the city hedging in the actions of citizens, the Romans thought of it as an agreement, a treaty that could bind together former enemies. In each case, human beings acting together created binding standards for *themselves*. Neither was foolproof, and Greece and Rome alike committed dreadful crimes and came ultimately to disaster. Both, however, illustrate the central theme of these texts, which is also the central theme of Arendt's political thought, i.e., that human beings do have the capacity to stand against destruction and to bring into being between them a world of civilization and freedom — *because they are plural*.

Wisely, Ludz begins her collection with a brief fragment dated August 1950 (well before the *Einführung* was even envisioned) entitled "What is Politics?" in which Arendt's central emphasis on plurality is clearly articulated. In the course of thinking about totalitarianism, Arendt had come to the conclusion that (as she wrote to Karl Jaspers the following year [144]) the radical evil evidenced in Nazism and Stalinism had something to do with attempting to dispense with human plurality in order to achieve omnipotence. God can be omnipotent only because he is one. Omnipotence is not an appropriate aspiration for human beings because they are plural. In the fragment from 1950 Arendt states that politics is based on the plurality of human beings, and that philosophers have failed to understand politics precisely because they have concerned themselves with man as such. For politics is not what men do, but what happens *between* them. It is not too much to say that all the rest of Arendt's specifically political theory is concerned with working out the implications of this plurality.

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The most comprehensive plan for the *Einführung* was to include a concern with "the various modi of human plurality and the institutions which correspond to them." In other words, wrote Arendt, "I shall undertake a re-examination of the old question of forms of government, their principles and their modes of action" (201). There is no draft on this subject intended for the *Einfuhrung*, but in her helpful commentary Ludz draws on relevant discussions in several of Arendt's English-language lectures and papers from the 1950's in order to illuminate her thinking about government. The crucial point here is her concentration on the various kinds of political relations *between* plural men — a set of horizontal relations neglected as a result of the traditional stress on vertical relations between rulers and subjects.

If the notion of plurality seemed to demand a rethinking of government, it had almost equally momentous implications for philosophy. Ludz draws on manuscript sources from the 1950's for a sketch of another unwritten chapter, on Socrates, in whose style of philosophizing Arendt saw a kind of open thinking much more friendly to plurality and politics than Plato's dogmatic absolutism. Although commentators have sometimes suggested that her interest in the life of the mind belongs to a later phase and represents a shift away from politics, it is clear that her central theme of plurality encompassed both right from the start. The two concerns are encapsulated in one particularly striking passage of the draft of the *Einführung* where, interpreting the freedom of the Athenian citizens as the opportunity to move through a rich plurality of perspectives on the common world and thereby to experience reality, she sets this freedom to talk and think alongside the freedom to initiate something new, and claims that together they form the meaning of politics and the reason why politics and freedom are inseparable (181-85).

For most modern readers "freedom" has an individualistic ring, and Arendt's stress on freedom and pluratity has often been read as an encouragement to 1960-style egotists to go off and do whatever they please with scant regard for the consequences. This is a serious misunderstanding. One of the persistent Arendtian themes that comes through particularly clearly in these texts (and Ludz rightly emphasizes) is concern for the *world* — for the structures of civilization which men have brought into being but which will last only if successive generations respect and augment them.

One of Arendt's early notes for the *Einführung* explicitly states that, whereas the concern of modern men centers on themselves, the central concern of politics must be the world. The fragment goes on to a cryptic mention of "deserts" and "oases," a frequent metaphor Ludz explicates with the help of the English-language "Conclusion"[2] from lectures on the history of political theory given by Arendt at Berkeley, California in 1955.

2. Fortunately, Arendt's English-language papers are now being edited by Jerome Kohn. The first volume, *Essays in Understanding, 1930-1954*, will be published by Harcourt Brace Jovanovich in March 1994.

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Looking back over the growth of modernity, the industrial revolution and the development of science and technology, Arendt remarks on the growth of "worldlessness," "the withering-away of the in-between," "the spread of the desert." This desert is an inescapable predicament. But, according to Arendt, ever since Nietzsche it has been wrongly supposed "that the desert is in ourselves," and modern psychologists actually try to help men "adjust" to "the conditions of desert-life," thereby destroying any possibility to "transform the desert into a human world." Another danger is "the possibility of sandstorms," i.e., of totalitarian movements that set atomized people in motion. The only hope for the rebuilding of a human world lies with a capacity for action that arises out of endurance. "Only those who can endure the passion of living under conditions of the desert can be trusted with summing up in themselves the courage which lies at the root of all action, of becoming an active being."

Arendt speaks of the non-political "oases" that exist in this political "desert" — oases of art, philosophy, love and friendship, "the life-spending wells which enable us to live in the desert without becoming reconciled to it," and of the danger that those who try to escape into these oases may carry the desert with them. However, this is not grounds for despair. "In the last analysis, the world is always a product of men, of man's *amor mundi* . . . . The world in a sense is always a desert which needs those who are beginners to be started anew."

Ludz' use of this and other supplementary texts to illuminate the fragmentary drafts of the *Einführung* is extremely helpful, although it calls into question the enterprise of trying to reconstruct the book. What the volume helps demonstrate is rather that all of Arendt's writings, published and unpublished, form a continuum, and that if one is to understand (say) *The Human Condition*, then one needs to read the whole mass of available evidence in order to trace the ideas it only partly articulates. Hopefully the publication of this admirably scholarly volume will encourage others interested in Arendt to read more of her writings instead of restricting themselves to her best-known works.

Margaret Canovan

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Jewish Identity and Modern Politics

Dagmar Barnouw, *Visible Spaces: Hannah Arendt and the German Jewish Experience* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990), 319 + XII pp.

Hannah Arendt still makes people nervous, if not angry. At a conference on "The German-Jewish Experience" held at the University of California in Berkeley, where Dagmar Barnouw delivered a paper on Arendt as a political philosopher, many in the audience were still irritated by Arendt's controversial book, *Eichmann in Jerusalem* (1961) and by her standing criticism of political Zionism as the politics of Israel. Barnouw's book is an attempt to remove these irritations in order to allow an adequate appreciation of Arendt's political philosophy.

Instead of describing Arendt's formative years in Königsberg, Marburg and Heidelberg under the influences of her assimilated Jewish family and her German teachers and professors, Barnouw begins her explanation of the origins of Arendt's political philosophy *in media res* — by linking her understanding of her thinking as expressed in *The Life of the Mind* with the concept of "the banality of evil" developed in her controversial report on the Eichmann trial. What happened to the Jew in the Third Reich and what led to the "final solution" was for Arendt a rupture in civilization (*Zivilisationsbruch*), which became as central to her political thinking as it did for Theodor W. Adorno's critique of culture. When Barnouw speaks of the German-Jewish experience, she has the Holocaust in mind. When Arendt speaks of her German heritage, she still refers to *Bildung* — German language, poetry, music and philosophy. For Arendt, the Holocaust marked the end of the German-Jewish dialogue and spelled the failure of Jewish emancipation and assimilation.

Barnouw's book is clearly not an intellectual biography. She presupposes a general knowledge of Arendt's life, such as presented in Elizabeth Young-Bruehl's *Hannah Arendt: For the Love of the World* (1982). Her approach demonstrates a similarity between Arendt's mode of thinking and writing, which might be characterized as "thought-stories," and Walter Benjamin's *Denkbilder*. Rather than speculating on the biographical influences of Martin Heidegger or Karl Jaspers, Barnouw focuses on Arendt's book, *Rahel Varnhagen: The Life of a Jewish Woman* (English translation, 1974), which allows her to elaborate on the "German-Jewish experience" in Arendt's thinking. Arendt began work on *Rahel Varnhagen* in 1929 and completed it in exile in 1938. Planned as her *Habilitation*, the German edition was not published until 1958. However, it was not this long incubation that influenced her perspective on Varnhagen but rather Hitler's

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accession to power in January 1933, the influence of her Zionist friend Kurt Blumenfeld and her experiences in exile.

Blumenfeld acquainted Arendt with the writings of Bernard Lazare, a French journalist who had written a history of anti-Semitism criticizing Jews for their lack of social and political responsibility. Lazare differentiated between a self-confident "pariah" and an assimilationist "parvenu" and favored the latter. Finding this distinction convincing, Arendt used it in her analysis of Varnhagen, who struggled all her life with the fact that she was born Jewish, hovering "between pariah and parvenu" until she opted for assimilation and was baptized on her wedding day. Although at times Arendt characterized Varnhagen as her "truly best friend," against whom and in whom she mirrored herself, she utilized Varnhagen's life as an historical example of the troubled German-Jewish relation which did not allow the Jews to be themselves but forced them either to assimilate or to become parvenus. Arendt asked of Varnhagen what Arendt asked of herself — to accept the fact of her Jewishness and the challenge of her position as an outsider. Instead of contributing to the Varnhagen legend, Arendt produced a critical case study of social assimilation and its failure.

Despite her admiration for Arendt, Barnouw is an accurate and a critical observer of this dialogue between two Jewish women. She finds Arendt's position at times moralizing, even to the point of distorting Varnhagen's personality. But she also rightly understands that Arendt's concept of "the Jew as pariah" is not a badge of honor and pride; it simply means that an outsider accepts the fact of his or her birth as a challenge rather than disguising it. Only by developing a minority identity can such an individual live responsibly in the world, which for Arendt means in the public sphere. This position requires not only critical distance from the minority group but also a self-critical stance. She abhorred nothing more than unquestioned loyalty to or simple affirmation of a religious or political community, since this would mean the denial of critical thinking. Her fierce independence, especially as manifested in her criticism of the politics of Israel, at times made it difficult for her Zionist friends to understand her. While a discussion of Arendt's critique of political Zionism is beyond the scope of this review, suffice to say that Barnouw sketches the historical context in which Arendt developed into a historian of political ideas under the influence of her Zionist friends.

Arendt shared with them the belief that the Jews should consider themselves not only victims but agents of history — that they should accept social and political responsibility within their communities and should fight for political equality instead of following the hopeless path of assimilation. Time and again she returns to the failure of German-Jewish assimilation, for which she blames not only the Germans but also the Jews who shunned the political sphere. Culturally, the Jews had been excellent Germans; politically, they had been invisible citizens. The Jews were German citizens, but not part of the German nation; they were considered Jews, not Germans. By contrast, Arendt admired American political culture, in which she could and did retain her identity

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as a Jew and fully participate in political life as a US citizen.

Arendt sided with people such as Blumenfeld, Weltsch and Judah L. Magnes in the dilemma of political Zionism, which not only posed a radical challenge to the *status quo* and offered the possibility of a choice but also meant Jewish nationalism. As early as 1929, after the first Arab revolt, Blumenfeld and Weltsch argued for an Arab-Jewish reconciliation that would lay the foundation for a bi-national state in Palestine. After 1945, it was Magnes, the president of Hebrew University, who fought for Jewish-Arab cooperation and a bi-national state, even to the point of founding the Ihud (Unity) Party to reach this goal. His utopian vision of a peaceful Palestine, shared by Jews and Arabs, was dashed with the founding of the State of Israel in May 1948. On her part, Arendt fought with her pen for the same ideals — a Jewish-Arab confederation and a bi-national state, political equality for all groups, pluralism in a secular state. She argued even more forcefully against the idea of the Jewish nation of Israel and Jewish nationalism, which would surround the state with enemies, making it a fortress and a source of new anti-Semitism. When her hopes were not fulfilled and Zionist nationalism required thoughtless solidarity, she distanced herself from the movement to which she owed so much. Barnouw carefully outlines Arendt's commitment to and critique of political Zionism in order to emphasize the chances missed in 1948 and how relevant her arguments remains.

While the Jews' fate in Palestine before 1948 and the founding of the State of Israel absorbed Arendt's attention, she also followed with bewilderment the news of the German atrocities against the Jews. Questions of responsibility and guilt under totalitarianism began to occupy her. Jasper, with whom she reestablished contact soon after the war, grappled with the same problem. In 1947 he published an essay titled "The Question of German Guilt" in which he differentiated between: "criminal guilt," which is a matter for the courts; "political guilt," which makes all citizens at least co-responsible for the deeds of the state in which they live; "moral guilt," which applies to individuals responsible for all their deeds and who cannot hide behind orders; and "metaphysical guilt," which binds all human beings in mutual responsibility. Although Arendt sympathized with Jasper's attempt to come to terms with the Nazi past, she was critical of his concept of "metaphysical guilt," especially with regard to "crimes against humanity." She was also unwilling to accept the separation of moral and political guilt, since the question of responsibility could not be divorced from a concrete political context in which moral responsibility is an integral part. As much as she argued against the temptation to judge all Germans collectively guilty, she also recognized an even greater tendency on the part of the Germans to reject any judgment. What irritated her most were those Germans deeply implicated in genocide who used the excuse "orders are orders."

Long before the report on the Eichmann trial, Arendt insisted on the necessity of holding those responsible accountable. The Holocaust had to be understood as bureaucratically organized and technically mechanized mass murder in which those who participated acted as normal jobholders and functionaries

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of the totalitarian state. She explored the new quality of guilt in *Eichmann in Jerusalem*, which focuses on the uncommon murderer as a common man, on the banality of evil and how to judge it. Although she showed nothing but contempt for Eichmann and left no doubt that he should be hanged, her Jewish contemporaries did not or could not follow her argument. What she saw as a political treatise on the trial, they saw as a provocation. The concept of the "banality of evil" disturbed those who only wanted to demonize Eichmann. As Arendt presented him, he was one with all Germans who abdicated their moral and political responsibilities under a totalitarian regime and thus became incapable of telling right from wrong. This was a crucial fact of the whole case, which the court did not address.

The truly provocative element of Arendt's analysis was her critique of the trial. Accordingly, Eichmann should have been tried in an international court for "crimes against humanity committed on the body of the Jewish people." She criticized most severely that the trial was staged as a tragedy of the Jewish people — that the case "was built on what the Jews had suffered, not on what Eichmann had done." This "new type of criminal" was not judged for his crimes against humanity but rather for "the most horrible pogrom in Jewish history." She also rejected the religious overtones of the court and the "religiously anchored dichotomy of Jews and Gentiles," which presented Eichmann as the demonic incarnation of hostile forces besieging the Chosen People. In her view, this was unworthy of the jurisprudence of a modern secular state.

What most enraged Arendt's Jewish readers was the problem of Jewish cooperation in the destruction of the Jewish people, which she called "undoubtedly the darkest chapter of the whole dark story." They found it unforgivable that she characterized the former Chief Rabbi of Berlin, Leo Baeck, a "Jewish Führer" and implicated the *Judenräte* (Jewish advisory committees) in the Holocaust. Although only a small part of her report dealt with this problem, she was criticized for her lack of reverence and/or even ostracized as a Jewish anti-Semite. It did not matter that she had relied for the details on Raul Hilberg's *The Destruction of the European Jew* (1961) or that Bruno Bettelheim, among others, defended her. What mattered was that she had been against collective Jewish solidarity and what Gershom Scholem called the "certainty of believers." But Arendt was interested neither in metaphysical certainty nor in the uncritical community of Jews; she wanted to free the Jews from their stigma as victims or martyrs of history, as she had done in all her writings since her Varnhagen book. Her German readers reacted quite differently to *Eichmann in Jerusalem*. The book became a touchstone for a whole generation of young Germans who consciously confronted the Holocaust for the first time.

Arendt's Eichmann book might well have triggered Barnouw's interest in writing her own book on Arendt. For the most part, the author develops a continuing commentary and criticism of many of Arendt's works. But there are places where the commentary becomes a narrative of thoughts, surprisingly in the most philosophical chapter titled "Visible Spaces," which brilliantly

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signifies the political realm of human experience, the utopian vision of the ideal public sphere, and past political models still viable today. Since Barnouw is otherwise so close and sympathetic to Arendt, it is strange that she takes exception to her where it matters most. Time and again she argues against Arendt's utopian impulses and desires. Her book also lacks a proper conclusion, even to the case she is making. It just ends. But these criticisms aside, *Visible Spaces* is an independent and critical study by a German intellectual. It is an important contribution to a new German-Jewish dialogue.

Klaus L. Berghahn

Rethinking Direct Democracy

Luciano Cavalli, *Governo del Leader e Regime dei Partiti* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1992), 298 pp.

The debate between the supporters of parliamentary democracy and those of direct democracy has always been heated. Luciano Cavalli's most recent book is an important contribution to this debate. He is a stalwart supporter of a presidential system, with a national executive elected by the people independently of party coalitions. He believes that a pure parliamentary system might have made sense in the 19th century but is no longer able to meet today's challenges. In the 19th century policy making was the result of prolonged parliamentary discussions, while this century requires action and decisions.

Cavalli defends his position describing the fragmentation and radical individualism in Western society. First, the breakdown of communal identifications and traditional family structure are seriously undermining republican civic virtues. Second, the fall of "secular religions" (10) has hastened the disenchantment: "This makes it possible for the citizen to try to choose directly who governs — on the basis of personal trust in which rational and metarational elements blend — and to develop later a relation of continued consensus on the same basis" (10). He sees a leadership elected by universal suffrage as a valuable institution, not only because it can provide the state with new legitimacy but also because it can help abate the centrifugal wave of particularism and reassert the primacy of politics over factional interests.

Cavalli's focus is on the Italian situation. If the Northern League cannot

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expand beyond the Northern regions, if the ex-communists (PDS) hold onto their traditional strongholds of Bologna and Florence, and if the Right (*Alleanza Nazionale*) gains control of various Southern cities, then this three-way split of the national electorate will probably generate territorial tensions and an even greater rise of particularist interests. But can the reform of the national executive alone really alter drastically the Italian political system? Cavalli thinks so: "A president above partisan interests during his mandate could successfully fight political clientalism and, more importantly, have an impact on the state and its functions. He could also restore the parties to their limited and legitimate sphere and through various initiatives change the present political class, which is the biggest problem. During elections the establishment of the presidency would force a regrouping and transcend the current fragmentation" (276).

The parties' role in post-WWII Italy has been extremely negative. Instead of encouraging a healthy and competitive circulation of elites, political parties selected the national leadership exclusively on the basis of co-optation. Stable and cohesive dominant coalitions, as in the case of the communists (PCI/PDS), or highly organized factions such as the Christian Democrats (DC), promoted political leaders on the basis of loyalty to the party (or faction) rather than individual merit. This practice benefited pragmatic personalities over the most able and competent ones. The "yes-men," always ready to climb the ladder of the party bureaucracy, perceived politics as an occupation rather than a service motivated by duty. In a nutshell, co-optation benefited party bureaucrats to the detriment of the democratic process.

The worst results of this selection process can be seen in the conformity and political output of the DC, which has always been a weak institution.[1] Firstly, because it has always been strongly influenced by an external organization (the Catholic Church). Secondly, because the organization has always suffered from internal factionalism. The influence of the Church and the centrifugal role of the factions resulted in a weak leadership. Most DC decisions were the result of extensive negotiations between the various factions. This helps explains why the party could never count on any autonomous dominant coalitions and on a vibrant party spirit. All elected representatives or party bureaucrats were first and foremost loyal to a single faction and not the party itself. The power struggles between the various factions had strong external repercussions: they threatened the stability of governmental coalitions and other state institutions. Since the DC was a party-state that controlled entire state institutions, its representatives were not loyal to the state, but to the faction responsible for their designation. Therefore, long-term state interests were always subordinated to those of the parties or of the factions.[2]

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1. See Angelo Panebianco, *Modelli di Partito: Organizzazione e Potere nei Partiti Politici* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1982).

2. On Italian foreign policy and how it was subordinated to the parties' 'internal' interests, see Sergio Romano, "Illusioni e Delusioni di un Decennio," in Carlo Jean, ed.,

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According to Cavalli, "a political party is a strong consociative, almost sectarian, organization, . . . which demands absolute loyalty of its members" (222). The electoral law reinforced the parties' power. Proportional representation diminishes the role of individual candidates by encouraging the electorate to vote for a symbol or a particular party. This results in a great deal of power in the hands of the central party leadership which can manipulate the electoral list, thus undermining the autonomy of local constituencies.

To the extent that after WWII in Italy the predominant role of the parties and the electoral law was not only to keep potentially competent leaders out, but also to prevent the emergence of new leaders, there have been no outstanding political personalities. The fate of the presidential republic would rest either on the rise of a new political movement (a centripetal force led by a charismatic leader able to interpret the grievances and aspirations of the majority of the population) or on popular referenda. In the latter case it is difficult to obtain the desired outcome, given that a parliament in tatters, with no real working majority, will sabotage any reform that threatens it. A reform of the national executive would be detrimental to the parties: it would break their hold on the state. In fact, the current paralysis in Italian politics is a result of the crisis of the old leadership, which wants to maintain its power and privileges at all costs and prevent the rise of any strong new elite able to deploy a credible governing program. Lacking a national constituency, the Northern League can either choose to remain in opposition or enter a broad governmental coalition and thereby "dilute" its federalist proposal.[3] Political realism should never discourage developing original ideas, but in this case it does challenge Cavallli's hypothesis of constitutional reform.

A discussion of two other issues would have helped provide a more complete analysis of the Italian situation: the federal and the national questions. At any rate, two questions remain. First, is a presidential republic compatible with a federal reform of local administrations and the regional decentralization of state functions? A presidential republic can be a possible alternative to the obsolete structures of command, streamlining the decision-making process. But a cure that treats the illness of central power has to be balanced against a system of increased popular control and participation. The strengthening of central power in foreign policy, defense, and law enforcement must be accompanied by a corresponding decentralization of executive powers to local communities and voluntary associations (families, the community, universities, ethnic minorities, cooperatives, professional orders, unions, etc.).

Second, will the reform of the executive reestablish an identity between

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Morte e Riscoperta dello Stato-Nazione (Milan: Franco Angelli, 1991), pp. 73-87. On the weakness of the Italian state, see Renzo De Felice, "Italia delle Bombe Nata l'8 Settembre," in *Corriere della Sera* (Aug. 8, 1993). On the crisis of Italian national identity, see Ernesto Galli Della Loggia, "La Rinascita di una Nazione," in *Corriere della Sera* (Sept. 17, 1993).

3. On the current crisis of the Northern League, see Sandro Viola, "Quando l'Industriale Snobba il Cavaliere," in *La Repubblica* (Jan. 24, 1994).

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people and state? And could this have negative implications, such as a return to 19th century nationalism, with its brand of chauvinism and aggressive xenophobia? Gian Enrico Rusconi has recently argued that national identity is one of the components that guarantee the stability of democratic systems.[4] Along with an inclusive participatory democracy, a common bond and a sense of solidarity can help overcome the crisis of popular participation and political awareness, especially in the more disenfranchised section of society. At the same time there should be a clear distinction between a Jacobin-inspired nationalism with its myth of centralization and the more viable republican ideal of "*patria*." What is needed is an overarching idea of citizenship able to overcome the possible ethnocentric implications of particularism by stressing an identity transcending but not suppressing localisms, on the basis of broader common values, goals and aspirations.[5]

The Craxi leadership of the Italian Socialist Party first proposed a reform of the national executive. Yet, the Socialist Party never clearly spelled out which presidential system it had in mind. Vice Secretary Amato favored the semi-presidential system modelled after the Fifth French Republic. Martelli favored the American model; while Craxi never took a definite position. The huge corruption scandal of "Tangentopoli" led to the electoral collapse of the Socialist Party and of any plans of presidential reform. In today's turbulent situation anyone advocating such a reform is likely to be accused of "Craxism" and dismissed outright. Now the federalist question is on the agenda. A broad political spectrum spanning all the way from the former Communist Party (PDS) to the League favors the introduction of federal elements in the Italian Constitution. The former communists advocate a very mild federalist position: they campaign for localism and decentralization. The Northern League is the real federalist party, but it has yet to propose a coherent federal constitution. Whatever the outcome of the current crisis, it is the federal question rather than Cavalli's presidential reform that is likely to remain central in Italian politics in the immediate future.

Paolo Morisi

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4. Gian Enrico Rusconi, "Ma la Nazione dov'e'?," in *La Repubblica* (February 9, 1991).

5. Concerning Roman citizenship Claude Nicolet stresses that ". . . Majestas was defined by Rome in a precise fashion which effectively confined to diplomatic and external relations, while avoiding any interference in matters of private law, customs or institutions. Cicero made this very clear when he recalled that in this more or less reserved sphere the right to accept any part of Roman law was conceded to by Rome both to her allies and to new citizens integrated in 90-89. This guarantee or endorsement (*fundifactio*) recognized the sphere of individual relations, the family, customs and religion as an essential though subordinate aspect of public life: these constituted the natural *patria* of which Cicero speaks, but at a higher level, was the national or imperial *patria* embodied in Rome and the right of a Roman citizen." See Claude Nicolet, *The World of the Citizen in Republican Rome* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), p. 46.

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Conservative Ecology

Vittorio Hösle, *Philosophie der ökologischen Krise: Moskauer Vorträge* (Munich: C. H. Beck, 1991), 151pp.

Vittorio Hösle's book is a sign of the times — bad times — in Germany. A series of lectures (delivered, symbolically and perhaps not insignificantly, in Moscow) by a young professor found frequently on the talk show circuit in Germany, this volume fits into a genre of conservative ecological writings by, e.g., people such as the recently deceased Herbert Gruhl, the philosophy professor, Robert Spaemann and his younger followers (Reinhard Löw, Peter Klosowski) and one, Hösle's own guiding light, Hans Jonas. Hösle's work reflects a new development in the newer, bigger Germany. With traditional vocabulary, he offers a four-part discussion of the ecological crisis: its intellectual-historical "basis" and its ethical, economic and political "consequences." A *Wunderkind* philosopher[1], he addresses a variety of ecological topics, such as the development of modern science, mechanical vs. holistic world-views, the intellectual and religious roots of the ecological crisis, philosophical attitudes toward nature, the tension between "ecology" and "economy" and various other topics of "eco-philosophy."

Hösle's book is not quite philosophical and scholarly, not quite a piece of social theory, and not really a handbook or how-to-do-it manual characteristic of the ecology movement. Rather, it is a popular rendition of intellectual and political themes for the educated man,[2] a kind of important, propagandistic style of literature common to the German Right, to writers such as Hermann Lübbe, Christian Meier, Bernard Willms, Hans-Joachim Arndt, Rainer Zitelmann or Klaus-Gerd Kaltenbrunner. Secondly, it has that disturbing tone characteristic of much of contemporary German political discourse following unification. It spends a great deal of time discussing political and economic themes, the "nation," limits to growth, critiques of Marx and the like, combined with proposals answering the "ecological crisis." But almost nowhere does the book have that reassuring mantra about the "*Bundesrepublik*" as a democratic and constitutional state so characteristic of pre-unification, post-war

1. Hösle has already written books on the history of philosophy, Vico, Hegel and others. See his *Wirklichkeit und Geschichte* (Stuttgart: Fromann-Holzboog, 1984) and *Hegels System* (Hamburg: F. Meiner, 1987).

2. The theme of feminism is completely absent from his rendition of the "ecological crisis"' despite a growing literature on eco-feminism and the role of women's politics in the Greens, from the "Mother Manifesto" to the strong party quotas and the Green Minister for Women's Affairs in Lower Saxony.

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German political literature and politicians' speeches. To be sure, a striking absence of avowals of democracy characterizes German conservativism recently. This is part of a new "Germany," so to speak, without either Willy Brandt or Petra Kelly, one the red "traitor" as Chancellor and the other whose life spans precisely the period of the older, thinner FRG with its limited sovereignty, moral self-consciousness and basis-democratic, pathos-laden social movements of whom she was the most striking representative. Hösle's discussion of various political issues lacks the usual references to rights, democracy, constitution or the dangers of illiberal thinking. Third, and most significant, the book's major innovation lies in Hösle's adaptation of the well-worn "paradigm shift" idea in its historicist form (rise of modern mechanical- technological age, the "turning point" to new ecological world-view). He ties it to an idealist reading of Carl Schmitt's concept of the "political" as a "friend-enemy" distinction. Thus, the major friend-enemy distinction in the present is between the advocates of technological growth society and those advancing an ecological one, the industrialists and the ecologists. This is the rewarmed "value conservative" vs. "structural conservative" argument popularized a decade ago by Erhard Eppler's "neither Right nor Left" claims that ecological thinkers from the various parties have more in common with one another than their party comrades bound to "quantitative thinking" of the "economic paradigm"(37). The argument, however, is distant from today's political circumstances. One can speak metaphorically of a conflict between industrial and ecological paradigms. This conflict concerns all the major political parties in Germany except the Greens. Nonetheless, there are no longer any visible "struggles" such as those of a decade ago between, e.g., IG Chemie and the ecology movement, or between pro-industry Social Democrats such as Holger Börner and "Sponti" and Joschka Fischer. If the struggle between industrialists and ecologists is a "friend-enemy" relation, "intensity" seems lacking. Even during the height of the alternative and anti-nuclear movements, talk of "civil war conditions" was exaggerated. A new "cleavage" provides a more accurate description. In any case, a serious discussion of these struggles would require reference to actors from the ecology and anti-nuclear movements, most of whom, like the Greens themselves, are not mentioned in Hösle's rendition of the divide between productivists and ecologists. They hardly represent the vision of ecological politics Hösle advocates.[3] This fits well in contemporary German debates on the politics of ecology, dominated as they are by ubiquitous talk of "consensus" and "communication," stemming largely from Habermas' influence on both the SPD leadership and the Realos. Thus even Otto Lambsdorff has proposed "ecological and social" remodeling; and "consensus" has become the ideology of ecological "remodeling" for the possible "traffic light" coalition between Greens, Social Democrats and (yellow) liberals.

3. Other kinds of current "struggles" — such as burning people with darker colored skin — also go unmentioned by Hösle.

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Hösle's book consists of an eclectic combination of Fritjof Capra's "paradigm models" and Carl Schmitt's "concept of the political." The book's interest rests not on Hösle's independent contributions to problems of eco-philosophy, but in the way his account contributes to German conservative eco-philosophy. One need not castigate Hösle as a "rightist" in order to note how his additions fit this context. Fundamentalist ideas such as "bioregionalism" and "biocentrism," and especially "cultural ecology" or regional-cultural aspects of the ecology movement, are not politically harmless in Germany. They obtain in a context where both the labor and the environmental movement, in opposition to European unification and NAFTA, support particular national interests aginst universalist claims, which historically have also been part of their rhetoric. For the most part, conservative eco-philosophers in Germany (such as Carl-Friedriech von Wiezäcker, Herbert Gruhl, Jonas and Spaemann) have seen their ideas and slogans adopted by the (largely left-wing) German ecology movement. Insofar as Hösle is likely to have any influence, it will probably be in this direction. Nonetheless, from the perspective of the evolving Right in Germany, he is a further puzzle-piece in the construction of a new "conservative revolution."

Hösle draws on Heidegger and Jonas (16ff., 46, 60-66), who see the "technological age" as an outcome of the changing ideas of nature during the scientific revolution, particularly Descartes (pp. 54ff). Although both Heidegger and Jonas tended to support authoritarian political solutions to this crisis, this critique of the modern world-view is shared by most versions of eco-philosophy. Hösle combines this outlook with other elements of conservative eco-philosophy: a vocabulary of the "critique of civilization," a theological focus on the integrity of creation and the protection of human (fetal) life, an odd invocation of the need for a new ecological leader (122, 143f) and a "stronger" state to manage the ecological crisis in a new "state of emergency" (121, 131ff, 141ff).[4]

In Germany, these emphases are not unique to Hösle, but he gives them a Schmittian veneer. He avoids accusations of pagan sympathy by defending the rationalizing elements of monotheism (52) and a Catholic version of creation like that of Spaemann or other Thomists. But he also adds a Schmittian interest in the secularization of theological ideas as political concepts, and places a particularly strong emphasis on the "moral homogeneity" of the Christian world and its transformation into national homogeneity. The shift, in his terms, from the "paradigm of religion" to that of the "nation," raises new problems of homogeneity and a "transformation of the friend/enemy axis" (29-30). Of course, Hösle claims it is wrong to seek ethnic or linguistic homogeneity through violent means, but this approach assumes national homogeneity as the defining feature of the modern state. This is why he worries about the horrid destruction of Russian "national pride" created by fifty years of "bolshevism." Here he introduces the vocabulary of the German far Right without blinking

4. On the "stronger state" image in ecological right-wing thought, see Thomas Jahn and Peter Wehling, *Ökologie von Rechts* (Frankfurt: Campus Verlag, 1990).

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an eye: "The world has no use for oppressed, tear-filled, indeed, *masochistic* nations" (23f., emphasis added).

His categories are adapted to the strong state — one required by the ecological crisis and the need to reconstruct and impose political discipline on consumption. This strong state is a common theme of conservative ecologists, whether Thomist or Straussian-Platonic. More than these figures, however, Hösle contributes to the statization of ecological discourse through his ubiquitious use of Schmitt's vocabulary — friend/enemy, homogeneity, political theological roots (religion, nation, economy), state of exception and *Staatsnotstand*, "neutralization," etc. — as well as new coinages such as the "ecological state" (123). Along with other conservative ecologists,[5] Hösle's attitude towards the economy is contradictory. On the one hand, without mentioning them by name, Hösle has pilfered liberally from the Greens and Joschka Fischer's ideas on ecological "remodeling" of industrial society.[6] He takes economic issues seriously. At one point he suggests the importance of developing a concept of value beyond the one developed by Marx: nature contraposed to labor-power. But for the most part, with an emphasis on the (ecological) state, Hösle proposes a palette of "*Umbau*" measures: eco-taxes, focus on the producer (*Verursacherprinzip*), new formulations to measure ecological balance and industrial production and the like. In the end, Hösle finds the answer for a liberal "ecological market economy" in the new "green capitalists," seen as able to provide charismatic leadership into the next paradigm (110, 119ff). The same problem Leggewie, Reusswig and Scharping have already pointed out in Spaemann's philosophical views of ecology and economy reappears here: despite elaborate discussions about the development of the modern world-view tied with Descartes and the idea of an "economic" system, capitalism always appears as the solution and never as the problem.[7]

Hösle's book raises the issue of ecology and natural philosophy in the German context insofar as it points out the relative absence of libertarian thinking about ecological issues in terms of ethics and politics, natural philosophy and social theory stemming from Critical Theory. Indeed, if one surveys philosophy in Frankfurt in the last twenty years, in the wake of the aporia raised by the uncontainability of instrumental reason and the domination of nature, few have attempted to provide an ecological reading of this problematic or considered the issue of a substantive or "objective" reason (to use Horkheimer's

5. See John Ely, "An Ecological Ethic? Left Aristotelian Marxism versus the Aristotelian Right," *Capitalism, Nature, Socialism*, no. 2 (Winter, 1989), p. 149f.

6. Joschka Fischer, *Der Umbau der Industriegesellschaft* (Frankfurt a/M: Eichborn, 1989).

7. Claus Leggewie, *Der Geist steht Rechts* (Berlin: Rotbuch, 1987) and Fritz Reusswig and Michael Scharping, "Wo steht die Natur, wenn der Geist rechts steht," in Thomas Noezel and Horst-Dieter Zahn, eds., *Die Kunst des Möglichen: Konservativismus und industrielle Kultur* (Marburg: SP Verlag, 1989). The same is true of the "deep ecological" and "biocentric" views of paradigm figures such as Capra.

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formulation in *Eclipse of Reason*).[8] In this respect, along with his eclecticism, Hösle raises issues for the ecological debate which seem unavoidable, yet remain ignored by the Left. He emphasizes the Aristotelian basis of Marx's theory of exchange value and use value, insofar as it opposes economics to chresmatics (or "money-making") on the basis of the limitlessness of money's proliferation (63), underscoring the value of "limit" in Aristotle's concept of economics.[9] And he focuses on the role of a teleologically-based *scala natura* in Aristotelian thought, which is the foundation of a coherent environmental ethics and jurisprudence seeking to avoid "biocentric" reductionism. Nearly all versions of ecological theory, such as thermodynamic approaches to entropy and "syntropy" measurement, theories of cost externalization and reinternalization, biodiversity and animal rights, presume a gradual emergence of mind from nature. Yet only a few writers emphasize it.[10]

Hösle provides interesting insights concerning property. Though his proposals tend to strengthen the state with little consideration of federalizing it, they merit attention. Hösle consides property to be like passports, which are the property not of the carrier, but of the state, and insists on a more responsible use of it, as well as on the strengthening of tort law. The milk may be owned, so to speak, by the consumer, but the bottle remains the property, on loan, of the milk factory. He also proposes a kind of legal corps in tutelary form, as "Guardians" to represent future generations in legislative action, and the introduction of environmental protection as a "state goal" under the constitution. Such proposals are scattered among a tendentiously conservative book privileging Rightist thinkers and taking the opportunity to swipe at Left figures such as those of the Frankfurt School or Ernst Bloch. The book concludes with a reference to Jonas' critique of the latter in his *Imperative of Responsibility*. Jonas criticizes Bloch for prefiguring the reconciliation of humanity and nature as the satisfaction of "all" possible needs. Hösle argues that, in contrast to Bloch, Jonas proposes "sublating" (*aufheben*) modern subjectivity in a manner "leading back to a higher level of antique cosmos-piety" (145).

This criticism of Bloch is disingenuous in two senses. First, it hides the old conservative problem of *universalizing* the good life. In Aristotle's terms, one must overcome necessary labor in a world where brooms do not move by themselves. This old issue was raised by Lukács in his essay "The Old and New Culture" where he argued that socialism seeks bourgeois universalization of an aristocratic virtue, substantive freedom, as the idea of giving to everyone the culture and prerogatives of aristocrats. This proposal must of course take into

8. Claus Eder has developed a social democratic defense of vegetarianism based on a marriage of Habermas' theory of reconstructed historical materialism and symbolic anthropology in *Die Vergesellschaftung der Natur* (Frankfurt a/M: Suhrkamp, 1988).

9. See Cornelius Castoriadis, "From Marx to Aristotle and from Aristotle to Us," *Through the Labyrinth* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1984).

10. Murray Bookchin, *The Ecology of Freedom* (Palo Alto: Cheshire, 1982); and *The Philosophy of Social Ecology* (Montreal: Black Rose Books, 1990).

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account the problem of improving productive capacity to produce leisure time. Now even Volkwagen is negotiating with I.G. Metal on a four-day work week. Here Hösle takes little account of the decades-long "end of the labor society" debates (Offe, Gorz). Problems of universalizing leisure time are minor ones for "strong state" advocates who reject any idea of substantive democracy. But even with such progressive industrial forces as VW and I.G. Metal as part of the debate, there is an unavoidably utopian element in ecological politics if one does not reject democratic politics. Second, the critique obscures the fact that Bloch is a decisive 20th century Left voice in the philosophy of nature. Consequently, he cannot be excluded. This rhetorical move on Hösle's part reflects a characteristic of conservative ideology in Germany today. Libertarian nature philosophy as part of the project of a eco-social "remodeling" of industrial society is missing from German debates, allowing conservative thinkers to retain currency. Few people have taken the aporias of Critical Theory on the domination of nature as a starting point from which to address ecological problems, or raise the old issue of nature as a "subject."[11] As Hollard-Cunz documents,[12] post-war German intellectuals on the Left remain antagonistic to such a project.

John Ely

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11. William Leiss, Murray Bookchin and a few Bloch followers, such as Eberhart Siefert and Barbara Hollard-Cunz, have largely been voices in a wilderness.

12. Barbara Hollard-Cunz, *Soziales Subjekt Natur: Geschlechtsverhältnis*, in *empazipatarishen politischen Theorien* (Frankfurt a/M: Suhrkamp), 1994.

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